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PARTISAN REVIEW

JULY - AUGUST, 1943

GEORGE ORWELL

The Situation in Britain

DWIGHT MACDONALD

The Future of Democratic Values

RAMON J. SENDER

The Eagle (a story)

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Comment on "The Failure
of Nerve" Controversy

POEMS BY KARL J. SHAPIRO, ROBERT LOWELL, AND
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275 Seventh Ave., New York 1, N. Y.

PARTISAN REVIEW

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Editors: DWIGHT MACDONALD, GEORGE L. K. MORRIS, WILLIAM PHILLIPS, PHILIP RAHV. Business Manager: JOAN LEWISOHN.

The articles in PARTISAN REVIEW, whether written by editors or contributors, represent the point of view of the individual author, and not necessarily of the editors.

PARTISAN REVIEW is published at 45 Astor Place, New York, N. Y.

PARTISAN REVIEW is published six times a year. Subscription: \$1.50 yearly; Canada, \$1.65; other foreign countries, \$1.80. Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes. Copyright July, 1943, by PARTISAN REVIEW. Reentered as second-class matter, January 20, 1940, at the post office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.



The Eagle

Ramón J. Sender

HE HAD FLED from the city and he went away through the fields, looking to the right and to the left at the tilled land and the waste land. In his hand he carried a chunk of bread, and walked and ate with an air of resignation.

He did not know where he was going. When he saw on the horizon the lights of a city or a village, he turned aside. He had stolen for the second time. Without doubt if they caught him they would shut him up in prison, and this time it would be more serious than when he had taken fruit and cornmeal, for now it was money he had stolen. A peso fifty, which a customer had left on the counter of a store. To steal money seemed to him much more dangerous.

He had been lucky, however. Some time ago he had known another Indian who had been hungry, and who had ended by stealing, and they had killed him. That was worse. Afterward, a brother of that Indian had been hungry too, and as he knew what might happen to him, instead of letting himself be killed he had started to kill himself. Worse still. Then they had caught him and shot him in a pretty little village which had a great fig tree in the square.

In a house of clever people where the Indian had worked in his youth, they once killed a cat because it ate something which it found within its reach. And they killed the wild beasts in the forest after luring them by the odor of food. As a boy he had hunted birds by attracting them into the square with a grain of corn. With food. Always with food.

The Indian, watching his feet carry him through the fields, said to himself, "If I had stayed in the city they would have killed me too for a robber, and maybe for an assassin."

For a long time he had managed to live by working. He had a long rope, and he hung it, doubled over and over, on his shoulder. He waited. Occasionally some well dressed man would come up and signal to him, and he would follow. Almost always they went to one of the furniture stores which were nearby. The Indian loaded his back with an enormous wardrobe, fastening it with the rope so that his forehead took all the weight. Between the rope and his forehead he put one of his hands with the palm turned outward. And he walked along the streets, calling out in an anguished voice to warn the passersby:

“Golpe!”

After he had walked like that for an hour and a half, sweating, his head trembling, a heavy pain in his neck, he received fifty centavos. On them he could live for two days. But lately he had not been able to handle the rope and the great wardrobes. He sat in the sun.

He had a wife and she died. He had a son and he skipped out. He had some land and they stole it. He had youth and strength, and they had gone as well.

He stared at his ragged shirt and said to himself:

“It is the only thing really mine, because it is so old that nobody else could use it.”

A donkey tied to a plow browsed with dry lips. A dog turned over a pile of refuse, searching too. A little insect which was hesitating by the side of a dirty puddle tested a watermelon seed, trying to find its vulnerable point. A sparrow ran after a crumb of bread. The leaf of a tree trembled, waiting for water. An Indian child drove the dog away from the garbage and fought him for the crusts. All were hungry.

The Indian looked through the window of a store. Someone wished to pass.

“Get out of the way, beggar!”

The Indian looked after him as he hurried by: “You are not hungry but you are afraid that you will be tomorrow.” He went on to a booth where they sold corn meal.

“Keep moving, peladito, if you are not going to buy anything.”

The Indian went away. He looked around him. All were hungry, and in the midst of the hunger of all the world, his own

was of so little importance that he began to believe that no one would stop him if he stole.

The day that he stole corn meal they ran after him and beat him. They broke a tooth and it bled heavily. It was strange that his blood was so red. In the midst of shame and misery that color of his blood gave him joy.

They put him in prison for a month. He had to walk in line with the others, and sometimes he passed four days without seeing the sky. A man with a pistol appeared, gave him a shove for everything, and ordered him around. "Beggar, sweep that." or "Beggar, scrub out the toilets." The Indian could not forget it, and when he came out he refused to steal until he fell in the street one day, and they picked him up half dead with hunger. They took him to a poorhouse, but in eight days, having eaten and slept, he escaped. It was the same as the prison, he had to walk in line with the others, and at times passed four days without seeing the sun.

When the hunger became insufferable he tried to return to work in the market, but the first time that he loaded a wardrobe on his back he fell to the ground. They had to take the load away from him. The merchants made fun of him, and that ridicule hurt him so that he could never forget it. He had to steal, and when he had eaten he fled from the city. He walked and walked, repeating to himself:

"They have taken everything away from me."

Even his huarachas he had had to sell for two centavos. He went barefoot, and almost naked. He looked at the horizon and saw some blue mountains on his left. He went toward them, and the fact of going somewhere made his progress almost happy.

When night fell upon him, he found a hole covered from the wind and slept. He woke at dawn, and began to explore the mountainside. He saw a lizard run by with its head raised. His boyhood playmates used to sing when they saw a lizard.

*"Run like an arrow
On the barren ground,
Little head first,
Tail switching round.
Hunt what you hunt,
Wherever it's found."*

The lizard was hungry, and was hunting insects. The Indian lost sight of it, and stared at the yellow earth, which showed red where he scraped it. He scratched his forearm with the other hand. On his skin, parched by the sun, by the dust of the roads, his nail left an earthy furrow, whitish at first, then reddened like the soil. And the Indian raised his head to the sky and murmured: "Everything is the same."

Then he thought of his loneliness there, at the foot of the mountain, and remembered his distant life when he had had a wife, a son, and land of his own. He had also a friend, a dear companion, with whom he had lost touch. "He will be somewhere," he said to himself, "the same as I am."

He remembered his friend's silver watch with its chain divided in two, ending on one side in a folding knife, and on the other merely attached to his clothes, because he had nothing to put on it. The Indian had never been able to get a watch like that. But now the police would not be able to find him, with watch or without it, and life was almost good. He looked at the horizon.

"Walking and walking, who knows if I could not come to a place where there aren't any clever people?"

But he went back to scratching his forearm resignedly. It was hard to know the way.

In the middle of the afternoon he saw some distant cows, and heard the voices of men. They must be herdsmen. He went further into the mountain and began to climb. Driven by hunger, he had to eat roots which he dug up with his two feet and his nails. At the end of eight days he felt himself weaker than ever.

One evening he heard a murmuring around him as though the nestlings of a bird were protesting their imprisonment. He climbed as he could, at the risk of dashing himself to pieces, and arrived at the nest. It was a nest of eagles. There were three eaglets, and when they saw him coming they fluttered their wings and opened enormous beaks. They were ugly and bald, nothing but beaks and claws. Around the nest he saw the remains of rabbits, of birds, or lizards. There was half a rabbit still almost warm. The Indian snatched it greedily and went off with it. He climbed down until he reached the valley. There he ate the raw meat down to the naked bones. He fell asleep, and when he awoke he felt himself strong. But he looked up at the high nest of

the eagles with a mixture of fear and repentance. He remembered the open mouths of the eaglets, their beaks and their talons.

"What will they be like when they have grown up?"

And he was afraid. He had heard stories of eagles who carried men through the air in their claws, and he was glad that the mother eagle had not surprised him, for on that height so difficult to scale, with his feet insecure above the abyss, he could neither have faced her nor fled.

"It's plain," he said to himself with disappointment, "that the old Indian can't do anything but die."

From afar he saw the eagle come at dusk, with tranquil wings and talons weighted with a prize. When he awoke with the first light, he turned his eyes to the heights and saw the eagle departing for the chase. Three days after having robbed the eaglets he was so overcome with hunger that he decided to climb again.

He waited until the eagle had disappeared. He mounted more easily than the first time because now he knew the way. From time to time he stopped and searched the horizon to see if the eagle were returning or not. The Indian was afraid. He was sure that if the eagle surprised him he would fall into the abyss or die beside the nest torn into pieces by the bird, whose outstretched wings were wider than his open arms.

The Indian found a whole rabbit and carried it off, descending so hastily that he scraped his knees against the jutting rocks. The screaming of the outraged eaglets pursued him.

He reached the valley and ran to his hole. He ate slowly. Then he drank from a spring and fell asleep. Fearing that the eagle might have seen him, he took the precaution of closing the opening of his hiding place with a great rock. At dusk he listened to the murmuring from the mountain. The eagle returned as always, with something in her claws. The Indian looked at her with feeling.

"She is bringing food for her little ones."

He remembered that he too had sometimes returned to his house with vegetables or meat for his wife and his child.

"Everything is the same," he said to himself as he contemplated the eagle.

The joy of the eaglets at their mother's return sounded hollow. Metallic chirpings, sharp outcries. The eagle glided gravely

in front of the nest, and in one of the slow curves raised herself a little upon her feet and fastened herself on the steep rock. The screeching grew louder, and then there was a silence.

"They are tearing the kill apart," the Indian said to himself. When the eagle went away he began to climb cautiously.

Many days passed, and the Indian felt himself secure in his old age beneath the sun. It was sweet to see the clouds each time he raised his head, and he looked at the branches of a shrub with a fraternal emotion. The shrub seemed to say to him:

*"Quiet, do not tell your secret.
Do not let the eagle know it.
Quiet, do not tell your secret,
Do not let the serpent hear it.
Quiet, do not tell your secret,
To the nest the wind will bear it.
Quiet, do not tell your secret.
Not in the lost and distant plain,
Not in the unyielding mountain,
Not in the silence of nightfall,
Not in the burning day."*

The Indian continued to watch the clouds passing over, and one of them had the form of a white eagle with outstretched wings.

Sometimes he ran behind the lizard when it reappeared. It raised its head amusingly above its feet as it walked, trying always to be taller. He loved it, and would have liked to talk to it, to make it his friend, but the lizard ran away as soon as he spoke the first word. To vary his food he hunted mountain rats, but one day he realized that he had no matches with which to make a fire, and that he was incapable of eating them raw. He could eat a rabbit or a partridge raw, but not that uncleanness.

One morning he climbed on sure feet to the nest. The eagle had gone away some time before. Confident that she would be far off, the Indian climbed.

He reached the nest. The nestlings, scandalized as always, bristled up, and the Indian withdrew his hand. "Soon these little animals will be able to defend themselves," he said, looking with fear and sadness at their hooked beaks.

He had his hand already in the nest when he looked, as he always did, in the direction from which the eagle would return. And he saw her coming back with her sure and stately flight. At first he thought it must be another bird, going to another nest, but soon he saw her turning to lose altitude in the place where she always did so. And the Indian, terrified, dropped the game where it was, and moved backward with a muddled haste. He stumbled everywhere. He could barely find any places to put his feet. The eagle descended. "She has seen me," the Indian said to himself. His hand faltered and he almost rolled into the abyss. His heart turned over. "She has seen me."

He would have liked to be able to talk to her, but he did not know how to talk to an eagle. He must kill her or confront her wrath as God willed. The Indian wanted to run and could not. And the eagle continued to descend. "She has seen me," he repeated with dread. Fear immobilized his feet, but he climbed on down with a grotesque alarm. He felt the shadow of her wings over the rocks. He raised his head and saw that she was descending. He let himself drop, his knees were lacerated against the rock, but he could rise, and he ran along the edge of a gulf trying always to hide and reach the bottom. Once there he ran toward the plain, and a few moments later gained its gray expanse. The shadow of the eagle was projected around him, even on top of his head. The Indian ran, feeling himself lost. He did not look up because he was afraid of seeing the eagle. He ran over the plain with all his strength.

The plain was barren, and the dusty plants threw large shadows. Here and there dry magueys raised themselves and gave a tragic accent to the level solitude. The running Indian was little, old and weak. The hollow croaking of the eaglets increased behind him, and behind and before, floating over the sandy earth, he felt the shadow of the wings.

"She has seen me. She has seen me."

He redoubled his efforts and ran. He felt the eagle on top of him. The world was immense and he might reach places where there would be huts with doors which could be locked.

"She has seen me. She has seen me."

Mechanically he called on his mother, whose memory he had lost in the fog of his misery. His lips repeated old phrases of

anguish. "Help! Mother, help!" And he ran. He ran. His feet struck sharp stones and were wounded, but he continued to run. Perhaps that sustained trot would carry him so far that the eagle could not follow. But the shadow of the eagle passed easily over him and went ahead to turn in a narrow descending circle.

"She has seen me. She has seen me."

He looked around him and saw a dry root as big as an arm sticking out of the ground. He tried to tear it up to defend himself. He could not, and feeling the eagle above him, he abandoned the root and went on running.

The eagle pursued him, descending in spirals which grew steadily smaller and smaller. The Indian stopped at last, stood still, and raised his head. The eagle let something fall, and mounted upward.

The Indian saw a rabbit, still warm, at his feet.

The eagle returned to her nest with her serene and tranquil flight, gaining altitude with each measured and rhythmic beating of her wings. The Indian bent down and picked up the rabbit and went slowly to his den, with his little eyes fixed on the eagle.

Without trying to understand he skinned the rabbit. It was still a little warm.

(Translated from the Spanish by Julia Davis)

Four Poems

Robert Lowell

The Capitalist's Meditation by the Civil War Monument, Christmas, 1942

Tonight the blackout. Twenty years ago
The playboys starred a neon tree; if Hell's
Inactive sting stuck in the stocking's toe,
A child could draw it. Union generals
Perching upon a pillar of dead snow,
Two cannon and a turdlike cairn of balls,
Livid in unfinished marble, know
Only the vulture's leavings of the warcloud:
Their dead-pans pray to the Wizard's Star for blood.

A blizzard soaps Christ's diapers, and all
The crowsfoot feathers mossaing Mars' brass hat
Whiten to angels' wings, and the War's snowfall
Slogs down the philanthropic plutocrat
(Who swished his whited blossoms of goodwill,
Like the sunlight on the hot-beds of world debt)
And still the vinery of Capital
Freezes the Puritan virtues into gold,
While Mars, pinched healer, taps their veins. I am cold,

War's coddling will not warm me up again.
Brazenly gracious Ares throws his arms
About his mother the mulct'd tycoon
(The pageantary understanding forms
Anonymous machinery from raw men,
Riding the whirlwind, it directs the drums);
I bawl for Santa Claus and Hamilton,
And slip the harness of war's vacant squeeze;
How can my funds for good and evil freeze?

This winter in Europe and America
The lights are out. Tonight Herodians lurch
Into the shuttered White House, manger or bar;
Blue lines of men and women are on the march,
And the unions' czars intrench for civil war:
The Union Generals tremble on their perch.
Tonight our rulers seek the Orient Star;
The gestapo dragoons the Magi's Star for blood.
I have no blood to suckle an infant God.

Mars is this winter's God. The Civil War
Barters the garish pathos of its bed—
Flaring poinsettia, sweet william, larkspur
And black-eyed Susan with her frizzled head—
For snows that blot indignity and honor;
But what is war to gold's eternal glimmer?
"I bring no peace-terms but the sword," Christ said,
"My nakedness was fingered and defiled,
And woe unto all those that are with child."

SALEM

In Salem seasick spindrift drifts or skips
With canvas skirts against the seaward panes,
Until the knitting seaman stabs at ships,
Nosing like sheep of Morpheus through his brain's
Asylum. Son of Salem, how the draft
Lashes the oily jelly about your head,
Beating up whitecaps! Son, the capital Craft
Dumps its damned merchandise in Salem's bed.

Here sewage sickens the rebellious seas.
Seaman, recall how Salem fishermen
Once swung their nimble fleets on the Great Banks.
Where was it that New England bred the men
Who quartered the Leviathan's fat flanks
And fought the British lion to his knees?

CONCORD

Ford idles here in his inventor's search
 For history, for over the faked ricks,
 The Minute man, the Irish Catholics,
 The ruined Bridge and Walden's fished-out perch,
 The belfry of the Unitarian Church
 Clangs with preposterous torpor. Crucifix,
 On you the heirs of Caiaphas transfix
 Mammon's unbridled industry, the lurch
 For lines to harness Heraclitus' stream!
 This Church is Concord. Concord, where Thoreau
 And Emerson fleeced Heaven of Christ's robe,
 Concord, a place of peace, for hire or show,
 Renowned for its embattled farmers' scream,
 Whose echo girdled the imperfect globe.

SONG OF THE BOSTON NATIVITY

Our Lady of Freedom:

Now at the spun world's Hub
 I labor with unchristian carollings
 While Boston Common, Hill and Country Club,
 Charlestown and King's
 Chapel sing Christmas Day
 To my childbed of clay.

My specialists write: "Dead,
 Dead as the gods and oaths of yesterday;
 Christ, how her carrion puffs out its death's head!
 Progress can't pay
 Beauticians. Make Town Hall
 Her coffin and her pall.

The blue Mayflower rots
 Low on this inbred stock. Brave mould, here all

The Mathers, Eliots and Endicots
 Brewed their own gall,
 Here Concord's shot that rang
 Became their boomerang."

"Peace and goodwill on earth"
 Liberty Bell rings out with its cracked clang.
 If Liberty requires a docile birth,
 Will Congress hang
 My infant Apathy
 Upon the red-taped Tree?

So, Child, unclasp your fists,
 And clap for Freedom and Democracy;
 No matter, Child, if your Ark Royal lists
 Into the sea,
 Soon the Leviathan
 Will spout American.

Chorus:

Cradle of Freedom, rock your little man;
 "Peace, peace," the sheepish angels sing,
 And Santa, the benighted Magian,
 Snows sheepskins on the Wolfish King;
 While Christ, the Model for our holiday,
 Ungirds His loins' eternal clay.

Karl J. Shapiro

THE SYNAGOGUE

The synagogue dispirits the deep street,
 Shadows the face of the pedestrian,
 It is the adumbration of the Wall,
 The stone survival that laments itself,
 Our old entelechy of stubborn God,
 Our calendar that marks a separate race.

The swift cathedral palpitates the blood,
The soul moves upward like a wing to meet
The pinnacles of saints. There flocks of thanks
In nooks of holy tracery arrive
And rested take their message in mid-air
Sphere after sphere into the papal heaven.

The altar of the Hebrews is a house,
No relic but a place, Sinai itself,
Not holy ground but factual holiness
Wherein the living god is resident.
Our scrolls are volumes of the thundered law
Sabbath by sabbath wound by hand to read.

He knows Al-Eloah to whom the Arab
Barefooted falls on sands, on table roofs,
In latticed alleys underneath the egg
On wide mosaics, when the crier shrills.
O profitable curse, most sacred rug,
Your book is blindness and your sword is rust.

And Judenhetze is the course of time;
We were rebellious, all but Abraham,
And skulked like Jonah, angry at the gourd.
Our days are captives in the minds of kings,
We stand in tens disjointed on the world
Grieving the ribbon of a coast we hated.

Some choose the ethics of belief beyond
Even particular election. Some
In bland memorial churches modify
The architecture of the state, and heaven
Disfranchised watches, caput mortuum,
The Human substance eating, voting, smiling.

The Jew has no bedecked magnificat
But sits in stricken ashes after death,

Refusing grace; his grave is flowerless,
He gutters in the tallow of his name.
At Rome the multiplying tapers sing
Life endless in the history of art.

And Zion womanless refuses grace
To the first woman as to Magdalene,
But half-remembers Judith or Rahab,
The shrewd good heart of Esther honors still,
And weeps for almost sacred Ruth, but doubts
Either full harlotry or the faultless birth.

Our wine is wine, our bread is harvest bread
That feeds the body and is not the body.
Our blessing is to wine but not the blood
Nor to sangreal the sacred dish. We bless
The whiteness of the dish and bless the water
And are not anthropagous to him.

The immanent son then came as one of us
And stood against the ark. We have no prophets,
Our scholars are afraid. There have been friars,
Great healers, poets. The stars were terrible.
At the Sadducee court he touched our panic;
We were betrayed to sacrifice this man.

We live by virtue of philosophy.
Past love, and have our devious reward.
For faith he gave us land and took the land,
Thinking us exiles of all humankind.
Our name is yet the identity of God
That storms the falling altar of the world.

May 8, 1943, New Guinea

THE SWAN

Bottomed by tugging combs of water
The slow and loath swan slews and looks
Coldly down through chutes of stilled chatter
Upon the shadows in flight among the stones.

Into abashed confusions of ooze
It dips, and from the muddy fume
The filtered and flute-like fishes rise
Endlessly up through all their octaves of gloom

To where the roofed swan suavely swings
Without qualm on the footling wave
That laves it on, with elbowing wings swelled
Wide under its eyes' held look and architrave.

Slow slow it slides, as if not to chafe
The even sleeve of its approach
Stretched stiff and oval in front of it,
Siphoning it on, selfless, silent and safe.

Jonquil-long its neck adjudicates
Its body's course, aloof and cool
It cons the nonchalant face of air
With its incurious and dispassionate stare.

On that grey lake frilled round with scufflings
Of foam, and milled with muttering,
I saw, lingering late and lightless,
A single swan swinging, sleek like a sequin.

Negligently bright, wide wings pinned back,
It mooned on the moving water,
And not all the close and gartering dark
Or levering winds could lift or flatter
That small and dimming image into flight.
Far from shore and free from foresight,
Coiled in its own indifferent mood,
It held the heavens, shores, waters, and all their brood.

The Future of Democratic Values

Dwight Macdonald

THE ARTICLES BY Messrs. Hook, Dewey and Nagel which opened this series put up a good defense of scientific method against the rising tide of obscurantism. This was a useful undertaking. But they ignored the crucial question: *why* is the tide rising? The assumption seemed to be that if only people would get some sense into their heads and act rationally, our problems would be well on the road to solution (or would never have arisen). To try to keep people from falling into obscurantism by logical arguments is like telling a neurotic it's all imagination. The neurosis resists such treatment, since it has a real function. This function is to meet a psychic need, and if the neurosis is to be eliminated, the need must be met in some other way.

So here: the New Failure of Nerve is an historical rather than a logical question. That is, it is an adaptation to a certain historical situation, and cannot be successfully attacked, or even wholly understood, except in relation to this situation. "The religious reflex of the real world can only finally vanish," writes Marx, "when the practical relations of everyday life offer to man none but perfectly intelligible and reasonable relations with regard to his fellow men and nature." The lack of such intelligibility and reasonability in the world we live in needs no underlining. Irrational modes of thought are increasing because we are in a period of profound social frustration, in which all roads ahead seem to be blocked. The excellent arguments of Messrs. Hook, Dewey and Nagel are, therefore, to some degree beside the point.

It might even be said that their onslaught on obscurantism, like that earlier attack made by the "Young Hegelians" which Marx and Engels criticised in *The German Ideology*, itself smacks of obscurantism, since they, too, pose a historical problem in terms of consciousness. "This demand to change consciousness," ob-

served Marx and Engels, "amounts to a demand to interpret reality in another way, i.e., to accept it by means of another interpretation." In attributing our difficulties to false consciousness rather than to false social institutions, the Young Hegelians of 1943 betray their fundamentally conservative attitude (with whatever Clemenceau sauce!). (Dewey seems to think, for instance, that if only enough children can be progressively educated, society will be changed. Actually, society must be changed if enough children are to be progressively educated.) The result is a superficial *optimism*, which shows itself culturally in reacting to the onrush of obscurantism exclusively with logical arguments, and politically in Hook's advice to the workingclass to give the war a "total democratic" character *without social revolution*. The crisis goes much deeper than such a philosophy realizes, and there is much more ground—and logic, too—for a pessimistic, even an obscurantist approach.

The proper place to begin a consideration of the New Failure of Nerve seems to me to be not in the realms of philosophy but in North Africa.

1.

At the beginning of *La Chartreuse de Parme*, Stendhal has a memorable description of the liberation of Milan from Austrian rule. It is 1796, and the young Bonaparte, fresh from the brilliant victory at the Bridge of Lodi, has entered the city at the head of his revolutionary army "which, having just won six battles and conquered twenty provinces, was fully equipped except for shoes, trousers, coats and hats":

At once a new and passionate social atmosphere materialized. An entire people realized on the fifteenth of May, 1796, that everything they had respected until then was utterly absurd, if not downright hateful. The withdrawal of the last Austrian regiment marked the downfall of the old ideas; to risk one's life became fashionable. Everyone began to live only to be happy after centuries of hypocrisy and dullness, every one felt he must love something passionately and be prepared to risk his neck for it. The interminable, suspicious despotism of Charles V and Philip II had plunged the Lombards in deepest night; now their statues were overturned and suddenly everything was flooded with light. For half a century, while the Encyclopedists and Voltaire had been enlightening France, the monks had dinned it into the good people of Milan that to learn to read or any other worldly pursuit was useless bother, and that

if one paid one's tithes punctually to the priest and confessed one's little sins, one was practically sure to go to heaven . . . The exaltation was so excessive and widespread that I can explain it only by this profound historical reflection: these people had been bored for a century.

So it was in the springtime of the bourgeois revolution. Last fall another army arrived in another land ruled by reaction. For the victory at Lodi, the deal with Darlan. For the ragged regiments commanded by a twenty-seven year old genius, the vast fleets bearing a formidably equipped host commanded by generals neither young nor geniuses. For the fresh breeze of freedom, the perpetuation of the stale atmosphere of Vichy. When Bonaparte entered Milan in 1796, the Marquis del Dongo fled to his country estate; when Eisenhower entered Algiers in 1942, the men of Vichy entertained his officers at their clubs. Bonaparte brought along a young artist who gave the delighted Milanese the first political cartoon they had ever seen: a drawing of a French soldier slitting the belly of a rich landowner, from which poured not blood but wheat. Eisenhower brought along Col. Darryl F. Zanuck, late of Hollywood. Eisenhower's army was as "non-political"—in the sense that the reactionary anti-Semite, Giraud, is non-political—as Bonaparte's was political. One might have expected an army of the Four Freedoms to begin with the liberation of the native population. But Eisenhower's first communique states: "The forces under my command bring with them a solemn assurance that the French North African Empire will remain French." His subordinate, General Patton, defined the modest aim of the American forces as the maintenance of "political as well as economic normality" in North Africa. Rarely before in history has so vast a physical force been deployed with such tragically—or comically, perhaps—small political results.

It is ironical that the first great American military venture in the war, a coup hailed by the liberals at the time as a "turning-point", should have proven to be such indeed, but a turning away from their values. What the French collapse of 1940 revealed about European bourgeois democracy, the North African campaign revealed about its American counterpart.

When I wrote "The (American) People's Century" last summer, there was still a good deal of illusion about the democratic war aims. In the year since then, however, the positive

idealism which was dominant in the first part of the war, as expressed in the Four Freedoms, the Atlantic Charter, and Wallace's "People's Revolution" speeches, has been superseded by a new line. As military victory comes closer, the philanthropic slogans can be honorably discharged: they have done their "bit", or tried to, and might prove embarrassing if permitted to survive into the peace-conference stage. There is also a broader consideration: the antagonism between actual policies and formal principles has become too acute to be bridged by even the most powerful propaganda. In England since last summer, the Tories have so consolidated their control of the Government that the Labor Party ministers dare not support the Beveridge Plan; Cripps has been squeezed dry and thrown aside; Gandhi has been jailed and the Congress Party has been temporarily defeated. In this country, the fall elections returned the most conservative Congress since 1933; the new taxes are regressive, food prices rise sharply, wages are frozen, profits enormous; the unions have become instruments of Governmental control, and the Administration and Congress are using the mine strike as an occasion for still further weakening labor; the Negroes are jimcrowed as much as ever in military and civilian life; big business is more powerful than ever, and its representatives have excluded almost completely both labor men and New Dealers from the policy-making level of the war agencies; foreign policy has been increasingly determined by the reactionary State Department. As a former radical leader remarked recently, "This time we're getting the post-war disillusionment during the war."

A nation fighting the kind of war the French Revolutionary armies fought, or the Red Army in 1919, does all it can to *politicalize* the struggle. It is notable that everything possible is done by our leaders to *de-politicalize* this war. As it grinds automatically on, as it spreads and becomes more violent, the conflict becomes less and less meaningful, a vast nightmare in which we are all involved and from which whatever hopes and illusions we may have had have by now leaked out. Some weeks ago, the Office of War Information issued directives to its propagandists on "the nature of the enemy". He was described as a bully, a murderer, a thief, a gangster, etc., but only once in the lengthy document as a *fascist*. Soviet Russia has never pretended to be

fighting for any international socialist ideals, but simply for national survival—"the Great Patriotic War" as the official slogan has it. The recent dissolution of the Comintern was Stalin's effort to wash his regime clean of even the smell of any general principles. With his usual cynical boldness, Dr. Goebbels expresses the new line: "To date, from the national viewpoint, we have fought only for illusory objectives—for the House of Prussia, or Hapsburg; for socialism and for national socialism; for questions of proletariat or bourgeoisie. But today it is for important things we are fighting: for coal, for iron, for petroleum, and above all, for daily bread." The German Army fights on because it is—an army. The people at home support the war—endure the war might be more accurate—because they rightly fear an even more terrible Versailles if the other side wins. The unreality of the "Democracy-vs.-Slavery" propaganda of the United Nations is exposed by their inability to appeal politically to the masses of enslaved Nazi Europe. The best wisdom of our war leaders is that it will take x tons of bombs to reduce y acres of European cities to rubble.

The increasingly *unconscious* character of the war—in the sense that the policies of the United Nations express no positive ideology or principles but merely an opportunistic adaptation to a reactionary status quo—coming as it does on top of twenty years of defeat of democratic and radical forces, has had its effect on American intellectual life. "Le 2 Décembre m'a physiquement dépolitiqué," wrote Baudelaire after Louis Napoleon's coup d'état. "Il n'y a plus d'idées générales . . . Si j'avais voté, je n'aurais pu voter que pour moi."* "There are no more general ideas"—what better describes the intellectual atmosphere today? Most political thinking has abandoned not only the old optimism of progress, but also the very notion of any consistent attempt to direct the evolution of society in a desirable direction. Submission to the brute force of events, choice between evils rather than between positive programs, a scepticism about basic values and ultimate ends, a refusal to look too far ahead—this is the

I owe this quotation to Meyer Schapiro's "Courbet and Popular Imagery" (*Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 4, Nos. 3 & 4, 1941) which is in part a study of the effect of 1848 on French writers and artists. It is remarkable, by the way, how many of the issues of this period (and the intellectual reactions to them) anticipate those of our own time.

mood. But history evolves, the world changes in one direction or another, whether we dare to be conscious of it or not. What I want to do in this article, therefore, is to try to relate the values most of us hold to (1) the historical situation, and (2) current political programs.

2.

The system of values which has been slowly, painfully built up since the end of the middle ages, and which has commanded general assent since the eighteenth century is today threatened as never before. These values, which achieved political reality in the American and French revolutions, are crystallized around the free development of the individual. I would roughly summarize them—and the concepts which are organically linked with them—as follows:

MATERIALISM: The substitution of this-worldly for other-worldly criteria in all fields. Man is the measure of all values, and his happiness and self-fulfillment here on earth the aim and justification of all institutions. Reason and science are substituted for traditional or mystical modes of thought.

HUMAN NATURE: Man is by nature perfectible and has been corrupted by bad institutions. Good institutions will permit the individual to develop his human potentialities. From this optimistic view of human nature flow two related beliefs: (a) *Fraternity*: all men are brothers, wars are stupid and immoral; (b) *Education as a Panacea*: if man is corrupted only by his environment, it follows he will be able to progress if he is taught the truth.

DEMOCRACY: The state exists for man, not vice versa. "Man" means the majority of citizens. Jefferson wonderfully summarizes the theory in the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, [deriving their powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it, and to institute new Government] . . ."*

*The words in brackets are omitted from this passage as it is inscribed on the walls of the recently opened Jefferson Memorial in Washington. The omission—they had to break a sentence in the middle to do it—is a commentary on what has happened to the values of 1776 in this age. As is, for that matter, the whole pompous, costly and tasteless Memorial, more suitable to one of the late Roman Emperors than to our greatest revolutionary democrat.

PROGRESS: There is a pattern in history, and it is a progressive, not a cyclical pattern. This progress, which is thought of as materialistic, is desirable: it is good in itself to produce more, to extend man's mastery over nature. The process is also inevitable: man is able to solve problems, to advance towards a better life.

These were the values of the revolutionary wing of eighteenth century political thought—Rousseau, Paine, Jefferson, Robespierre. The conservative wing—Locke, Montesquieu, the American Constitutionalists—differed only on Democracy, being distrustful of majority-rule and preferring oligarchy. It was the revolutionary ideology which won out, and which still dominates our culture—in a more sophisticated and less naively optimistic form, of course. The neo-conservatives of our time, in attempting to revive the doctrines of Adams and Locke, exaggerate the differences between the two wings. Because they themselves reject the propositions on Materialism, Human Nature and Progress, they pretend there was a split all along the line in the eighteenth century. The actual situation is revealed in Randall's *The Making of the Modern Mind*:

From the beginning of the century onward there rose one increasing paean to progress through education. Locke, Helvetius and Bentham laid the foundations for this generous dream; all men of whatever school, save only those who clung like Malthus to the Christian doctrine of original sin, believed with all their ardent natures in the perfectibility of the human race. At last mankind held in its own hands the key to its destiny; it could make the future almost what it would. By destroying the foolish errors of the past and returning to a rational cultivation of nature, there were scarcely any limits to human welfare that might not be transcended.

What has happened is that the above values have come into conflict with the actual development of capitalism, and, as always, it is the values and not the productive system which are giving way. Worse, those developments which had seemed to be steps towards the realization of these values appear today as their executioners. The great liberating power of the last two centuries, the growth of the forces of production, which turned men's eyes from heaven to earth and created the material plenty out of which a humanistic culture and ethics could grow, this has now become, by a dialectical turn, the new enslaver. Man has learned to master nature so well that we use the most advanced technology to blast to bits the fabric of culture. Art museums, hospitals, vast industrial works, ancient churches and modernistic housing

projects, whole historic cities like Warsaw, Coventry, Cologne, and Nuremberg—all are being destroyed with the most admirable efficiency week after week, month after month. Every one can read and write, popular education is a reality—and so the American masses read pulp fiction and listen to soap operas on that triumph of technology, the radio, and the German and Russian masses are the more easily indoctrinated with a lying and debased official culture. The freeing of man to develop himself has had the effects which Erich Fromm described in *Escape from Freedom*: craving to be rid of this empty ‘freedom’, the masses turn neurotically to totalitarian Leaders. The struggle for universal suffrage is won, and the result is the rise of plebescitary dictatorships, in which the State authority becomes sacred precisely because it claims to represent “the People” against the individual. Far from decreasing in power, as all progressive thinkers from Jefferson to Marx and Lenin hoped and believed it would, the State is becoming an end in itself, subjugating the human being as the Church did in the Middle Ages. In the new religion of the State, which has reached full growth in Germany and Russia and which is steadily growing here, the individual is once more frozen into the hierarchical, irrational pattern of a society based on status. The peoples of the world are being organized into vast power-States, military-socialist in form, which are devastating the globe in their internecine struggles.

3.

It is natural there should be a “new failure of nerve” in the face of such a situation. The bourgeois revolution has reached a dead end. Regression is manifest everywhere, culture goes obscurantist, politics become more and more totalitarian. There is a general retreat from the one basic philosophy and program which both explains what has happened to the bourgeois revolutionary values and also opens up a road forward to their fulfillment. “In its theoretical form,” writes Engels, “modern socialism originally appears as a further and ostensibly more logical extension of the principles established by the great French philosophers of the eighteenth century. Like every new theory, it had at first to link itself on to the intellectual material which lay ready to its hand,

however deep its roots lay in economic facts.” (*Anti-Duhring*, p. 23) Historically, Marxism is the continuation of the values of the bourgeois revolution, on which it drew for its sources of theory: English classical economics, French political theory, and Hegelian philosophy.* Marx and Engels quarrelled not at all with the values of 1776 and 1789, but only with the failure to realize them. Much is written today, often by those who should know better, about Marxism as a doctrine of dictatorship, an inhumanly reductive system. But what impresses me is precisely Marx’s concern with human values, his instinct for the human “point” of political and economic questions, as in such key concepts as the fetishism of commodities and the alienation of the worker from his work under capitalism. In substituting the workingclass for the bourgeoisie, historical materialism for the naive idealism of the eighteenth century, they were seeking the forces to carry to completion the aspirations of the Enlightenment. Their aim could have been subscribed to by Jefferson: a society “in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all”.

The modifications Marx made in the conceptions of the Eighteenth Century about human nature, democracy and progress were all in the direction of greater realism and sophistication. It is remarkable how often his analysis of human motivation anticipates Freud, for example. Most modern historians of significance, from Pirenne and Sombart to Beard follow the materialistic interpretation first worked out by Marx. We live in pretty much the kind of world Marx and Engels thought we should be living in, failing socialist revolution: a world of wars, crises, mass unemployment, centralized power and general instability. The way the classic bourgeois values have today produced their very opposite does not mean they should now be abandoned, as the obscurantists claim. It is rather a tribute to the soundness of Marx’s much-abused dialectical conception of history. Nor should one forget that Marx made his predictions at a time when almost

*“Marx, then, in developing his new socialist and proletarian science,” writes Karl Korsch in his valuable little book on Marx, “took his cue from that early study of society which, although first communicated to him by Hegel, had really been born of the revolutionary epoch of the bourgeoisie.” The testimony of the modern obscurantists is also impressive: to writers like Drucker and Barzun, Marx is the anti-Christ, most wicked and potent of the followers of Rousseau, and the link between the French revolution and both fascism and Stalinism.

all other social thinkers entertained the most absurd optimism as to the longevity, in fact the eternity of capitalism.

As any one knows who follows even superficially the work being done today in economics, sociology and political science, Marxism is still very much a force to be reckoned with in those fields. Last year, for example, Joan Robinson, second only to Keynes himself among Keynesian economists, published her *Essay On Marxian Economics*, which is all the more impressive as a critical tribute because of her basic political disagreement. Marxism is far from dead, despite the obituaries constantly being printed—so constantly, in fact, as to attest to the liveliness of the corpse!*

But something has obviously gone wrong with the Marxist scheme of things so far as progress towards socialism is concerned. Two passages will perhaps indicate what it is:

The monopoly of capital becomes a fetter upon the mode of production, which has grown up and flourished along with it, and under it. Centralization of the means of production and socialization of labor at last reach a point where they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. This integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated. (*Capital*, Vol. 1, pp. 836-7)

III. *Proletarian revolution*—solution of the contradictions. The proletariat seizes the public power . . . Socialized production upon a predetermined plan becomes henceforth possible. The development of production makes the existence of different classes of society thenceforth an anachronism. In proportion as anarchy in social production vanishes, the political authority of the state dies out. Man, at last the master of his own form of social organization, becomes at the same time the lord over nature, his own master—free. To accomplish this act of universal emancipation is the historical mission of the modern proletariat. (Engels: *Socialism, Scientific & Utopian*, pp. 74-5)

The first prophecy is being fulfilled. The incompatibility of private property forms with modern mass production has reached the point that everywhere private capitalism is dying, collective economics is advancing, planning is replacing the anarchy of the market, the bourgeoisie is being expropriated. The contradiction

*There is an interesting split today between the economists and sociologists, who seem to be becoming more interested in Marxism, and the philosophical-literary intellectuals, who were originally attracted to Marxism for political reasons and who are now repudiating it for the same reasons. This is part of a broader split, in which the intellectuals, disillusioned by Stalinism and the decline of the Left, are turning from politics, while the economists and sociologists are growing more political.

between the expansion of productive power and the restriction of the effective market has become so acute that the system simply cannot hold together without more and more intervention from the state. The present war, which is itself largely the result of this contradiction, has speeded up the collectivizing process in England and America, and in Germany has carried it so far as to produce a non-capitalist society.*

The second prophecy, on the other hand, is far from fulfillment. For the expropriators of the bourgeoisie are not the working-class, but a new political bureaucracy. Hence we see collectivised—or “statified”—economy coming about not only without that political democracy Marx expected to accompany it, but even with a lessening of the degree of democracy characteristic of capitalism. Far from the state dying out and man becoming free “as anarchy in social production vanishes”, the state is omnipotent and man enslaved in direct proportion to the degree of collectivisation. The first successful workingclass socialist revolution has degenerated into a totalitarian system whose control over the thoughts and actions of the people is more complete than anything known in history. And this system was erected by Stalin on the foundation of collectivised property laid by the 1917 revolution—not, as Trotsky, misled by the mechanical application of Marxism, expected it to be, on the *ruins* of collectivised property.

One cannot deny that this evolution was not anticipated by Marx and Engels, nor that it requires great changes in traditional Marxist thinking. We must, first of all, face the fact that the workingclass has so far, despite some excellent opportunities, proven unable to take and hold power anywhere, and that the rise of Stalinism and Fascism is primarily due to this failure. From the degeneration of the 1917 revolution we must conclude that collectivism is a necessary condition for socialism but not a guarantee of it; that certain sacrifices of democracy made by the Bolsheviks in the early years of the revolution facilitated the transition to Stalinism; and that in general means must be related more closely to ends, and problems of democratic organization *within*

*“Orthodox” Marxists will disagree with this. But it is not with the revolutionary groups that I am primarily concerned in this article. They are not in fashion now, for obvious reasons, and their defects are therefore being cried up without any recognition of their real virtues: their courageous adherence to revolutionary principles, and their fidelity—however mechanical—to a method of historical analysis which is far superior to the systems of their critics.

and between workingclass groups considered as seriously as problems of class warfare and economic change. From the transition from bourgeois private capitalism to bureaucratic collectivism which is taking place *without socialist intervention* throughout the world, we must conclude that once capitalism has reached a certain stage of decay it will not automatically be succeeded by socialism, but that if the workingclass is unable to resolve the crisis *its* way, the bourgeoisie will resolve it *its* way: through the milder forms of state intervention at first, through fascism ultimately and their own elimination as a ruling class.

In a word, we can no longer believe in the inevitability of socialism. This weakens Marxism propagandistically, but strengthens it scientifically. In collectivism there are possibilities of both desirable, from my viewpoint, and undesirable kinds of social systems. The mystique of inevitability can be removed from Marxism without injuring—quite the contrary, in fact—the basic insights of Marxism: that class struggle is the underlying pattern of history; that men act primarily from materialistic, “selfish” interests; that the development of the forces of production sets certain limits and offers certain possibilities to political action.* Nor should we forget that the “point” of Marxism, as developed by Marx at least, was not economic determinism but rather political activism, as expressed in his famous epigram: “The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it.”

These are the conclusions I should draw from the course of history since the last war. They are very modest compared to those now being drawn by others, whose various political positions are based on the assumption, conscious or not, that democratic socialism is a dream, the workingclass has shot its bolt, and the

*This is not inconsistent with the criticism above of Marxism for its failure to foresee the evolution of *totalitarian* collectivism, for this was an error in *judgment*, due to Marx's habitual over-optimism and over-confidence in the working class—a defect one finds in all great revolutionaries. It was not a defect of Marx's *system*, since the rise of collectivism can be explained best by the necessities of organizing modern mass production, and the totalitarian form it has so far taken can be explained best by Marx's theories of class struggle and exploitation. An attempt to build socialism in a backward country without the help of revolutions in more advanced countries would be expected, in Marxian theory, to lead to a super-dictatorship; and thus did Trotsky predict in the early twenties, and thus it has turned out. Trotsky was wrong about the collectivised form Stalinism took, but not about the essential point: that Stalin's cause meant totalitarianism.

present social systems, on our side of the battle-lines at least, capable of indefinite survival. It is time to look at these positions.

4.

There would seem to be only two historically real positions to take at this time. (By "historically real" I mean (a) reflecting the actual development of society, and (b) having some chance of realizing the values those who hold them want to see realized.) One is that of those who quite frankly favor the new totalitarian values. The other is that of those who hold to the old democratic values, and look to revolutionary socialism to realize them.

Neither is held by any significant number of American intellectuals today. There are developing, instead, four fairly well-defined positions, common to all being a rejection of revolutionary socialism in favor of supporting (and compromising with) various elements in the status quo.

There are, first of all, those religious obscurantists who conclude that since there is a historical connection between the evils of the present and the traditional democratic values, therefore we must go back to pre-bourgeois values. They have already been dealt with at length in this series, so I shall only note that in some ways they are the most logical of all. For if revolutionary socialism is the only road forward for democratic values, then if this road is rejected, it is logical also to reject those values. Or, put slightly differently, if one gives up one's socialist beliefs, one can only take a *tragic* view of the world today. Thus it is the religious thinkers who now show, in a subjective sense, the *least* failure of nerve, since they (like the fascists) dare to recognize the actual state of affairs and draw drastic conclusions from it.

The remaining three schools all accept the basic democratic values, and hope to preserve them by various non-revolutionary means. The *Totalitarian Liberals* simply insist that the present trend towards bureaucratic collectivism is a *fulfillment* of progressive ideals (except, of course, in the Axis nations!). The *Conventional Liberals* are disturbed by existing anti-democratic tendencies, have a vaguely socialist faith, but put off any action in order to give "lesser evil" support to the present war. The *Conservative Liberals* see most clearly of the three groups the unpalatable reality of existing trends, but reject socialism as itself

totalitarian, and hope to salvage the basic democratic values by a "balanced" or "mixed" society.

The best examples of *Totalitarian Liberalism* are to be found in the speeches of Vice-President Wallace, with their "people's revolution" mystique, and in such journals as *P.M.* (for all its splendid muckraking) which are aggressively critical of bourgeois reaction and aggressively uncritical of the Roosevelt Administration and Stalinist Russia. Underlying this position is a Victorian "optimism of progress" which is a regression like the obscurantists' revival of Original Sin, except in the opposite direction. Social progress is seen as the automatic, inevitable consequence of industrialization and the spread of education, and as little sensitivity is shown towards the quality of the political means taken to those ends as certain Marxists show towards the quality of the means taken to bring about collectivism. The present war is seen in positive terms as a "revolutionary" war, a "People's War", etc. The openly reactionary turn the war has taken has greatly reduced its influence at the moment. Its chief significance in the future will probably be to corral sincere but naive liberals into uncritical support of Stalin's post-war policies.

The *Conventional Liberal* position as applied to this war is essentially an extension of the old Popular Front idea: to support democratic capitalism against fascism on the theory that once the fascist threat has been beaten off, the masses can then resume their struggle towards socialism. The German Social Democracy gave the tactic its first large-scale test, before the term "Popular Front" was coined, when they tried to stave off Hitler by supporting Hindenberg and the Weimar Republic. Later tests were equally unsuccessful. What always seems to happen is that this policy is able to defend capitalism against the workers, but not against the fascists. In crisis periods like Germany in 1930-1933, Spain in the Civil War, France in 1935-1936, the status quo never remains stable but is overthrown from the right if the left withholds its fire.

The mistake the Conventional Liberals make is to look at politics in static terms. History is always moving in one direction or the other, and in war time this motion is accelerated. The reactionary evolution of the war will proceed with increasing speed, as it has been doing in the past year, unless it is checked or reversed by some counter-movement of the workingclass and

their allies. This counter-movement cannot be stimulated by supporting the present war, as the experience of the British and American labor movements to date has shown. Furthermore, also since politics are dynamic and not static, the process of fighting the war as conducted by Roosevelt and Churchill is weakening the forces that will fight, after the war, for a progressive social order. In fact, it seems likely that the Conventional Liberals, from Sidney Hook on the left to Bruce Bliven on the right, will find themselves confronted with such a threat of domestic reaction, even after Hitler has been safely eliminated, that they will continue to rally to the "lesser evil". There is really no discernible end to this allegedly temporary tactic. If before the war it was proper to support the lesser evil of bourgeois democracy against fascism in Spain and France, if during the war it is proper to support the lesser evil of Roosevelt-Churchill against Hitler, after the war it seems almost certain there will be further crises, if not also wars, in which a similar choice can be made. But the Conventional Liberals look neither forward nor backward, but keep their eye on the ball: Beat Hitler!* This is just as well for their peace of mind.

Since what I am trying to get at in this article is the relationship of basic values to the historical situation today, it does not seem necessary to criticise the Conventional Liberal position more fully. For it is an opportunist, hand-to-mouth affair, taking for granted its basic values, which are those of reformism-cum-ultimate-socialism, and putting off any action on them until the Greek kalends. I don't think socialist ideals can be kept in a state of suspended animation "for the duration", and I fear that when Hitler is finally defeated and the workingclass movement gets its famous "breathing spell", it may have quietly expired from holding its breath so long.

5.

The most interesting of these positions is *Conservative Liberalism*, a complex reaction to the failure of both the bour-

*Or, as William Ferry puts it in an excellent critique of Sidney Hook's "Failure of the Left" which appears in the May issue of *Enquiry*: "One element in the situation is seized from its context as the receptacle of all political significance, and crucial political disagreements based on a broader perspective than 'licking the villain' are condemned as malicious and irresponsible criticism."

geois and the proletarian revolutions to realize their aims. It holds fast to progressive *values*: materialism, irreligion, scientific method, free development of the individual. But it inverts the *concepts* with which these values are logically and historically linked, seeing human nature as evil, history as either cyclical or without pattern, democracy as unattainable under any circumstances, class rule as inevitable, and man helpless to make any major improvement in society through conscious effort. The fascist rejects both progressive values and concepts; the Marxist accepts both; each approach is consistent in itself and a guide for action. The Conservative Liberal, attempting to combine progressive values and reactionary concepts, runs into paralyzing contradictions in both his theory and his program. But in this time of disillusion on the Left, his negativistic doctrines are enjoying considerable vogue.

The founding fathers of Conservative Liberalism were Mosca, Michels and Pareto.* Their most important work was done in the decades just before the last, and their freedom from the optimistic illusions of their period allowed them to foresee the catastrophes in store for bourgeois and socialist democracy. Michels' analysis of the political organization of pre-war Social Democracy is the definitive work in a field more important today than ever. Mosca and Pareto both developed some interesting theories about class rule and ideology, though Marx anticipated their basic conceptions. But their approach seems to me to be an emotional reaction (springing from disillusionment) against the aspirations of democratic ideology rather than what it claims to be: an application, for the first time, of scientific method to the field of politics.

Because the Enlightenment had naive faith in "human nature", the "Machiavellians"—to use Burnham's convenient term—react with the assertion that human nature is something eternally fixed, with narrow limitations that cannot under any circumstances be overcome. To Rousseau's mysticism of optimism, they counter-

* James Burnham deals with their theories in his new book, "The Machiavellians" (John Day, \$2.50) which is the kind of popular summary of ideas that reminds one of dehydrated food: the juice and flavor as well as the water have been extracted. It manages to be both pedantic and superficial, and the reader interested in these theories will find an equivalent amount of the original texts more instructive and much more entertaining.

pose a mysticism of pessimism. This is a secular version of Original Sin, without the logic the conception has in religious doctrine. As Ruth Benedict indicated in an earlier article in this series, modern anthropology provides evidence that "human nature" is neither "Good" in the Noble-Savage sense nor "Bad" in the Original-Sin sense, but rather capable of almost anything depending on environmental influences. "Human Nature" is thus a historical, not a psychological, phenomenon, and there can be no "iron law of oligarchy" *in general* but only, if at all, for the specific period and place—Europe at the turn of the century—Michels was studying. Granted that the Enlightenment's optimism about man's nature, in the light of Freudian psychology, appears excessive today, it surely does not advance matters to react to the other extreme and assert an equally abstract conception. And at least the Enlightenment grasped the root of the matter: that man is shaped by his institutions.

In their view of "human nature", the Machiavellians betray a lack of that historical sense which is the greatest contribution of Marxism to the modern consciousness. In their eyes the history of the past is a kind of morality-play which exposes, in endless repetitive scenes, the viciousness and gullibility of mankind. They are not interested in the differences between one period and another, and the reasons for these differences, but rather in establishing, by myriad examples, that the same mental and moral qualities have produced and eternally will produce the same results. This view seems to me a regression to the pre-Hegelian historical tradition. A passage from Engels' *Anti-Duhring* is to the point:

This newer German philosophy culminated in the Hegelian system, in which for the first time—and this is its great merit—the whole natural, historical and spiritual world was presented as a process, that is, as in constant motion, change, transformation and development; and the attempt was made to show the internal interconnections in this motion and development. From this standpoint, the history of mankind no longer appeared as a confused whirl of senseless deeds of violence, all equally condemnable before the judgment seat of the now matured philosophic reason, and best forgotten as quickly as possible, but as the process of the development of humanity itself. (p. 30)

For all their amassing of data, Mosca and Pareto never get beyond the descriptive level. They are unable to explain why social relations differed in the past and what differences may be expected

in the future. In their terms, indeed, it is not possible to see why there should be *any* change at all, since, in Pareto's words, "The centuries roll by; human nature remains the same." Lacking any theory of historical development, they deal in "eternal truths", relative to every time and place and hence relative to no time and place—in the style of the Enlightenment, though with a reverse content.

The Machiavellians, doubtless in reaction against the emphasis put on ultimate ends by the progressive ideologists, confuse scientific objectivity with a disinterest in values. "The law that it is an essential characteristic of all human aggregates to constitute cliques and sub-classes," writes Michels," is, like every other sociological law, beyond good and evil." (*Political Parties*, p. viii.) Pareto endlessly assures the reader that his "logico-experimental" method is also beyond good and evil, dismissing "Right Reason, Highest Good, Justice, Welfare, etc." as "all names that designate nothing more than indistinct and incoherent sentiment". But, as a critic of Pareto well puts it: "Ends and means profoundly affect one another, and it is impossible to deal logically with means without clarification of the nature of the ends. Reason, too, is concerned with the relation of various ends to each other, with the possibility of their mutual consistency, or harmony, and in cases of conflict with the grounds of preference."* Even where ends are illusory, the scientist must account for men's choosing them and must explain their effect on reality. Yet although Pareto exposes in voluminous detail the rationalizations men have created to give an air of logic to their irrational actions, he never develops any theory to explain the *reasons* for this behavior, since that would mean attempting to relate means and ends. Marx and Freud both evolved theories, but Pareto ignores their work in this field entirely—Freud's name fails to appear in the 100-page index to his four volumes—and contents himself with monotonous "debunking", a procedure only one level higher than naive faith.

The Machiavellians make a similar false disjunction between theory and action. "Everybody can argue all night about how to save society," writes Burnham in *The Machiavellians*, "but only

*Morris Ginsberg in *The Sociological Review*, July, 1936.

a few have told us any truths about society.” They revise Marx’s epigram: “The democratic ideologists have only tried to change the world; the point, however, is to interpret it.”

But under the surface, they too have their values, just like Marx, the chief difference being they are less conscious of their bias and so less able to allow for it, which lands them in some very queer places. Their very lack of interest in values is itself a value, reflecting the hypertrophy of technique and organization and the atrophy of human consciousness that marks class society today, especially in the totalitarian countries. Pareto writes of “the conflict between knowing and doing”, and continues: “For purposes of knowing, logico-experimental science is the only thing of any value; for purpose of doing, it is of much greater importance to follow the lead of sentiments.” The political result of this obscurantist dichotomy appears when he goes on to propose “a community divided into two parts, the one in which knowledge prevails ruling and directing the other in which sentiments prevail, so that, in the end, action is vigorous and wisely directed.” (*The Mind and Society*, p. 1241) From this to Mosca’s accepting a Senatorship from Mussolini and Pareto’s enshrinement as the ideological father of fascism is not a long step.*

It is odd that Mosca and Pareto should have ended up in the fascist camp, for they were personally old-fashioned liberals, whose preferences lay along the line of Mosca’s balance-of-power society, in which “juridical defense”—i.e., civil liberties—would be insured by seeing that no one group or party grew strong enough to have things all its own way. The Church, the army, the business interests, the politicians, the peasants, even the trade unions were to keep enough autonomy to be able to check each other; political was to be separated from economic power; etc. This conservative program was the result of their disillusionment with radical democracy. They came to feel that any attempt at revolutionary social change would result in a *worse* state of affairs. Napoleon expressed this attitude very well when he wrote in 1812:

All the misfortunes that our beautiful France has been experiencing have to be ascribed to ‘ideology’, to that cloudy metaphysics which

*“When, in an audience with Mussolini, I mentioned Pareto, he interrupted with emphasis, ‘He was my teacher. A great man—a very great man.’” (A. G. Keller, in *The Yale Review*, June, 1935.)

goes ingeniously seeking first causes and would ground legislation upon them instead of adapting laws to what we know of the human heart and to the lessons of history. Such errors could only lead to a regime by men of blood . . .

Pareto quotes this passage with approval. Yet he might have taken warning from the fact it was Napoleon, the dictator, who preferred tradition to "ideology" (i.e., revolution). The Machiavellians were very sensitive to any threat against the balance of society from the revolutionary Left, but they seem unaware that capitalism in their day was already unbalanced by the rising power of Big Business, and that "Juridical Defense" was threatened from the Right as well as from the Left. The cutting edge of their criticism was consistently directed against the progressive ideologies, and when fascism materialized they saw it as a bulwark of liberalism against proletarian dictatorship. One hardly knows whether to laugh or cry when one reads that just before his death Pareto wrote an article solemnly warning the Fascist authorities not to make the "mistake" of interfering with free speech and academic freedom, and insisting that the Italian universities should continue to teach Marxism.

The failure of the 1917 Revolution has caused a contemporary revival of the Machiavellian doctrine—attractive anyway to the American turn of mind because of its pragmatic disdain for values and general theory in favor of "results", "hard facts". Two schools may be defined: the indigenous petty-bourgeois tradition (John Chamberlain, Charles A. Beard, *Common Sense* magazine), and the ex-Marxists (Max Eastman, James Burnham, Lewis Corey). The failure of 1917 has disillusioned the latter about socialism and reinforced the former in their ancient hostility. There are big individual differences between the various Conservative Liberals, and some of them no doubt would repudiate the Machiavellians as their ideological godfathers. But the theory analyzed above fits better than any other the actual tendency of their ideas. Eastman's ideas about the incompatibility of socialism and human nature are straight out of Mosca and Pareto. Corey's proposal of a "mixed economy"—or a "mixed-up economy", as a friend calls it—and Chamberlain's earlier concept of a "Permanent NEP" are based on Mosca's "juridical defense" formula. The psychological background of these beliefs is also similar to that of the Machiavellians: disappointment with the results of

progressive movements. "The Moscow Trials," Chamberlain writes, "clinched the case for me against complete State ownership of the means and materials of production." Just as the Machiavellians fashion an ideology simply by reversing the concepts of 1789, the Conservative Liberals, equally lacking in historical sense, simply reverse 1917—collectivism is the root of all evil, and the victory of any one class is to be avoided. Their formula for avoiding Thermidor is simple: don't make a revolution. If the Bolsheviks trusted too mechanically in collectivism and proletarian dictatorship, the Conservative Liberals have an equally mechanical faith that all good things will flow from the reverse of those propositions. Of the two errors—not that I think one must choose either—the Bolsheviks' is much the more forgivable.

The logic of events has put our Conservative Liberals into the same awkward positions as the Machiavellians found themselves. One might expect a "juridical defensist" to favor the strengthening of labor unions in America today, for example, as a counterweight to the tremendous power of monopoly capitalism. Yet we find Chamberlain prosecuting, in the pages of *Fortune*, a spirited "open shop" campaign. The ambivalent attitude of Mosca and Pareto towards fascism is repeated in their epigone, Burnham, who expounded the totalitarian elements in their philosophy in *The Managerial Revolution*, and now, in *The Machiavellians*, puts forward the liberal elements, without any apparent suspicion of the head-on collision between the two. And always, whatever their vagaries, the Conservative Liberals are led by their doctrine to line up with the top dog, the big battalions. Their superficial pragmatism and their overmastering fear of revolutionary change alike lead them to bow to the dominant forces of the moment. Their system is essentially no more than an apology for the status quo.

The Conservative Liberals, past and present, fail to see that in a society as dynamic and unstable as modern capitalism, the effect of a "debunking" of progressive ideology without putting anything positive in its place, is not to bring society into balance but simply to throw it still more in the totalitarian direction in which it is evolving of its own momentum. The Conservative Liberals' dream of a stable society run by an intelligently moderate

elite proves inadequate either to control or explain the shattering forces working under the surface. History fills their ideas with an alien content, and their intelligent elite become the demagogues and adventurers of fascism.

6.

Finally, to sum up the line of my argument, and to apply it to the historical situation we are in:

1. *The development of the forces of production is pushing the world in a collectivist direction.* Hence the bourgeois-democratic status quo is dynamic, and cannot successfully be maintained either as a Maginot Line against fascism (Conventional Liberals) or a stable, balanced society (Conservative Liberals). The direction in which the bourgeois-democratic status quo is evolving is towards the "bureaucratic collectivism" of Germany and Russia, because this is more favorable to the present ruling class than would be the alternative of a workingclass socialist collectivism. To attempt to defend the status quo is to (1) weaken the progressive forces which might bring about the socialist alternative, and (2) be one's self drawn along in the evolution towards the totalitarian alternative.

2. *The bureaucratic-collectivist movement of present-day society is destroying the basic progressive values.* These are my own values, and also, I imagine, the values of most of those who will read this. There is nothing eternal about them; they are historical phenomena and will disappear, are in fact disappearing, as capitalism develops into collectivism without social revolution. Marxian socialism offers the best chance of reconciling collectivism with progressive values.

3. *Bureaucratic collectivism may or may not develop into a new form of class rule as permanent as was that of the bourgeoisie.* It is too early to tell, and the alternative socialist evolution is still possible. Up to now, it has been no more than a series of *ad hoc* solutions to various crises: the 1929 depression in capitalist nations, the isolation of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, preparation for war in all cases. It is still opportunistic, "unconscious" in a historical sense. Not until the present phase of armed struggle for the redivision of the globe has resulted in

the assured dominance of one or more powers, and has been followed by the successful readaptation of bureaucratic collectivism to peacetime conditions—not till then can we see it as the next great historical epoch. During the war period, which will probably extend long beyond the defeat of the Axis powers, there will be unexpected overturns, sharp breaks in ruling-class control; and the transition to peace may be expected also to have its deep economic and social crises.

4. *There will, therefore, be revolutionary opportunities for a long time.* They may or may not be successfully exploited. The organized workingclass movement is today extremely weak. And any one who has taken active part in the Trotskyist movement, as I have, knows how fossilized as to theory, sectarian as to action, and undemocratic as to organization the present Marxist revolutionary groups have become. We need new workingclass organizations, new radical parties, a reshaping of Marxian doctrine—all three on a less exclusively workingclass basis, with a broader sense of human fraternity and democratic rights. But the road ahead lies that way, not in a retreat to pre-Marxist concepts and an attempt to compromise with a deteriorating status quo. Furthermore, those who insist on the hopelessness of the socialist cause must either show that some other class and program is more likely to realize progressive values, or else abandon those values. My objection to the various liberal positions is that they do neither.

5. *The issues go much deeper than the political level.* The whole culture-pattern of American society, for example, has been formed by the present ruling class, through its control of the press, the radio, the schools, the movies, the churches and other instruments of expression. This is why, although the ideological requirements of a war against Hitler call for humane and democratic values, our war leaders have done nothing to re-educate people along those lines. The increase of race prejudice during the very war allegedly against Nazi racialism is one indication of how deeply American society has been impregnated with reactionary prejudices, and the ominous direction these prejudices will take in any crisis situation *so long as no positive counter-force is exerted*. Only a philosophy of the underdog, the common man, that is willing to carry its logic to revolutionary extremes can shatter the monopoly of culture in the hands of the upper classes.

6. *The process of revolutionary struggle itself has a profound effect on "human nature"*. It brings out virtues and intelligences in the masses which have been systematically repressed by respectable society. Who has not been impressed, and even amazed, at the heroism, the capacity for sacrifice, the energy and resourcefulness, the fraternity, the spontaneous cooperation manifested by the Russian masses in the early revolutionary years, the French workers in the great strikes of 1936, the Spanish people in the first two years of the Civil War, and our own rubber and automobile workers during the 1937 sit-down strikes?

There is a fine passage in *The German Ideology*: "Both for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness and for the success of the cause itself, the alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary, an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, a *revolution*. This revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class *overthrowing* it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew."

London Letter

I begin my letter just after the dissolution of the Comintern, and before the full effects of this have become clear. Of course the immediate results in Britain are easy to foretell. Obviously the Communists will make fresh efforts to affiliate with the Labour Party (this has already been refused by the LP Executive), obviously they will be told that they must dissolve and join as individuals, and obviously, once inside the Labour Party, they will try to act as an organised fraction, whatever promises they may have given beforehand. The real interest lies in trying to foresee the long-term effects of the dissolution on a Communist party of the British type.

Weighing up the probabilities, I think the Russian gesture should be taken at its face-value—that is, Stalin is genuinely aiming at a closer tie-up with the USA and Britain and not merely “deceiving the bourgeoisie” as his followers like to believe. But that would not of itself alter the behaviour of the British Communists. For after all, their subservience to Moscow during the last fifteen years did not rest on any real authority. The British Communists could not be shot or exiled if they chose to disobey, and so far as I know they have not even had any money from Moscow in recent years. Moreover the Russians made it reasonably clear that they despised them. Their obedience depended on the mystique of the Revolution, which had gradually changed itself into a nationalistic loyalty to the Russian state. The English left-wing intelligentsia worship Stalin because they have lost their patriotism and their religious belief without losing the need for a god and a Fatherland. I have always held that many of them would transfer their allegiance to Hitler if Germany won. So long as “Communism” merely means furthering the interests of the Russian Foreign Office, it is hard to see that the disappearance of the Comintern makes any difference. Nearly always one can see at a glance what policy is needed, even if there is no central organisation to hand out directives.

However, one has got to consider the effect on the workingclass membership, who have a different outlook from the salaried hacks at the top of the party. To these people the open declaration that the International is dead must make a difference, although it was in fact a ghost already. And even in the central committee of the party there are differences in outlook which might widen if after a while the British Communist party came to think of itself as an independent party. One must allow here for the effects of self-deception. Even long-term Communists often won't admit to themselves that they are merely Russian agents, and therefore don't necessarily see what move is required until the instructions arrive from Moscow. Thus, as soon as the Franco-Russian military pact was signed, it was obvious that the French and British Communists must go all patriotic, but to my knowledge some of them failed to grasp this. Or again, after the signing of the Russo-German pact several leading members refused to accept the anti-war line and had to do some belly-crawling before their mutiny was forgiven. In the

months that followed the two chief publicists of the party became extremely sympathetic to the Nazi weltanschauung, evidently to the dismay of some of the others. The line of division is between deracinated intellectuals like Palme Dutt and trade union men like Pollitt and Hannington. After all the years they have had on the job none of these men can imagine any occupation except boosting Soviet Russia, but they might differ as to the best way of doing it if Russian leadership has really been withdrawn. All in all, I should expect the dissolution of the Comintern to produce appreciable results, but not immediately. I should say that for six months, perhaps more, the British Communists will carry on as always, but that thereafter rifts will appear and the party will either wither away or develop into a looser, less Russophile organization under more up-to-date leadership.

There remains the bigger puzzle of why the Comintern was dissolved. If I am right and the Russians did it to inspire confidence, one must assume that the rulers of Britain and the USA wanted the dissolution and perhaps demanded it as part of the price of a second front. But in Britain at any rate there has been little sign in the past dozen years that the ruling class seriously objected to the existence of the Communist party. Even during the People's Convention period they showed it an astonishing amount of tolerance. At all other times from 1935 onwards it has had powerful support from one or other section of the capitalist press. A thing that it is difficult to be sure about is where the Communists get their money from. It is not likely that they get all of it from their declared supporters, and I believe they tell the truth in saying that they get nothing from Moscow. The difference is that they are "helped" from time to time by wealthy English people who see the value of an organisation which acts as an eel-trap for active Socialists. Beaverbrook for instance is credited, rightly or wrongly, with having financed the Communist party during the past year or two. This is perhaps not less significant as a rumour than it would be as a fact. When one thinks of the history of the past twenty years it is hard not to feel that the Comintern has been one of the worst enemies the working class has had. Yet the Upper Crust is evidently pleased to see it disappear—a fact which I record but cannot readily explain.

The other important political development during these past months has been the growth of Common Wealth, Sir Richard Acland's party. I mentioned this in earlier letters but underrated its importance. It is now a movement to be seriously reckoned with and is hated by all the other parties alike.

Acland's programme, which is set forth almost in baby language in many leaflets and pamphlets, could be described as Socialism minus the class war and with the emphasis on the moral instead of the economic motive. It calls for nationalisation of all major resources, immediate independence (not Dominion status) for India, pooling of raw materials as between "have" and have "not" countries, international administration of backward areas, and a composite army drawn from as many countries as possible to keep the peace after the war is done. All in all this programme is not less drastic than that of the extremist parties of the Left, but it has some unusual features which are worth noticing,

since they explain the advance Common Wealth has made during the past few months.

In the first place the whole class war ideology is scrapped. Though all property-owners are to be expropriated, they are to receive fractional compensation—in effect, the bourgeois is to be given a small life-pension instead of a firing squad. The idea of “proletarian dictatorship” is specifically condemned; the middle class and the working class are to amalgamate instead of fighting one another. The party’s literature is aimed chiefly at winning over the middle class, both the technical middle class and the “little man” (farmers, shopkeepers etc.) Secondly, the economic side of the programme lays the emphasis on increasing production rather than equalising consumption. Thirdly, an effort is made to synthesise patriotism with an internationalist outlook. Stress is laid on the importance of following British tradition and “doing things in our own way”. Parliament, apparently, is to be preserved in much its present form, and nothing is said against the Monarchy. Fourthly, Common Wealth does not describe itself as “Socialist” and carefully avoids Marxist phraseology. It declares itself willing to collaborate with any other party whose aims are sufficiently similar. (With the Labour Party the test is that the LP shall break the electoral truce.) Fifthly—and perhaps most important of all—Common Wealth propaganda has a strong ethical tinge. Its best-known poster consists simply of the words “Is it expedient?” Crossed out and replaced by “Is it right?” Anglican priests are much to the fore in the movement though the Catholics seem to be opposing it.

Whether this movement has a future I am still uncertain, but its growth since I last wrote to you has been very striking. Acland’s candidates are fighting by-elections all over the country. Although they have only won two so far, they have effected a big turn-over of votes against Government candidates, and what is perhaps more significant, the whole poll seems to rise wherever a Common Wealth candidate appears. The ILP has been conducting a distant flirtation with Common Wealth, but the other Left parties are hostile and perhaps frightened. The usual criticism is that Common Wealth is only making progress because of the electoral truce—in other words, because the Labour Party is what it is. In addition it is said that the membership of the party is wholly middle-class. Acland himself claims to have a good nucleus of followers in the factories and still more in the Forces. The Communists, of course, have labelled Common Wealth as Fascist. They and the Conservatives now work together at by-elections.

The programme I have roughly outlined has elements both of demagoguery and of Utopianism, but it takes very much better account of the actual balance of forces than any of the older Left parties have done. It might have a chance of power if another revolutionary situation arises, either through military disaster or at the end of the war. Some who know Acland declare that he has a “führer complex” and that if he saw the movement growing beyond his control he would split it sooner than share authority. I don’t believe this to be so, but neither do I believe that Acland by himself could bring a nation-wide movement into being. He is not a big enough figure, and not in any way a man of the people. Although of aristocratic and agricultural background (he is a fifteenth

baronet) he has the manners and appearance of a civil servant, with a typical upper-class accent. For a popular leader in England it is a serious disability to be a gentleman, which Churchill, for instance, is not. Cripps is a gentleman, but to offset this he has his notorious "austerity", the Gandhi touch, which Acland just misses, in spite of his ethical and religious slant. I think this movement should be watched with attention. It might develop into the new Socialist party we have all been hoping for, or into something very sinister: it has some rather doubtful followers already.

Finally a word about antisemitism, which could now be said to have reached the stature of a "problem". I said in my last letter that it was not increasing, but I now think it is. The danger signal, which is also a safeguard, is that everyone is very conscious of it and it is discussed interminably in the press.

Although Jews in England have always been socially looked down on and debarred from a few professions (I doubt whether a Jew would be accepted as an officer in the Navy, for instance), antisemitism is primarily a working-class thing, and strongest among Irish labourers. I have had some glimpses of working-class antisemitism through being three years in the Home Guard—which gives a good cross-section of society—in a district where there are a lot of Jews. My experience is that middleclass people will laugh at Jews and discriminate against them to some extent, but only among working people do you find the full-blown belief in the Jews as a cunning and sinister race who live by exploiting the Gentiles. After all that has happened in the last ten years it is a fearful thing to hear a workingman saying "Well, I reckon 'Itler done a good job when 'e turned 'em all out", but I have heard just that, and more than once. These people never seem to be aware that Hitler has done anything to the Jews except "turned 'em all out"; the pogroms, the deportations etc. have simply escaped their notice. It is questionable, however, whether the Jew is objected to as a Jew or simply as a foreigner. No religious consideration enters. The English Jew, who is often strictly orthodox but entirely anglicised in his habits, is less disliked than the European refugee who has probably not been near a synagogue for thirty years. Some people actually object to the Jews on the ground that Jews are Germans!

But in somewhat different forms antisemitism is now spreading among the middle class as well. The usual formula is "of course I don't want you to think I'm antisemitic, but—"—and here follows a catalogue of Jewish misdeeds. Jews are accused of evading military service, infringing the food laws, pushing their way to the front of queues, etc., etc. More thoughtful people point out that the Jewish refugees use this country as a temporary asylum but show no loyalty towards it. Objectively this is true, and the tactlessness of some of the refugees is almost incredible. (For example, a remark by a German Jewess overheard during the Battle of France: "These English police are not nearly so smart as our SS Men"). But arguments of this kind are obviously rationalisations of prejudice. People dislike the Jews so much that they do not want to remember their sufferings, and when you mention the horrors that are happening in Germany or Poland, the answer is

always "Oh yes, of course that's dreadful, but—"—and out comes the familiar list of grievances. Not all of the intelligentsia are immune from this kind of thing. Here the get-out is usually that the refugees are all "petty bourgeois"; and so the abuse of Jews can proceed under a respectable disguise. Pacifists and others who are anti-war sometimes find themselves forced into antisemitism.

One should not exaggerate the danger of this kind of thing. To begin with, there is probably less antisemitism in England now than there was thirty years ago. In the minor novels of that date you find it taken for granted far oftener than you would nowadays that a Jew is an inferior or a figure of fun. The "Jew joke" has disappeared from the stage, the radio and the comic papers since 1934. Secondly, there is a great awareness of the prevalence of antisemitism and a conscious effort to struggle against it. But the thing remains, and perhaps it is one of the inevitable neuroses of war. I am not particularly impressed by the fact that it does not take violent forms. It is true that no one wants to have pogroms and throw elderly Jewish professors into cesspools, but then there is very little crime or violence in England anyway. The milder form of antisemitism prevailing here can be just as cruel in an indirect way, because it causes people to avert their eyes from the whole refugee problem and remain uninterested in the fate of the surviving Jews of Europe. Because two days ago a fat Jewess grabbed your place on the bus, you switch off the wireless when the announcer begins talking about the ghettos of Warsaw; that is how people's minds work nowadays.

That is all the political news I have. Life goes on much as before. I don't notice that our food is any different, but the food situation is generally considered to be worse. The war hits one a succession of blows in unexpected places. For a long time razor blades were unobtainable, now it is boot polish. Books are being printed on the most villainous paper and in tiny print, very trying to the eyes. A few people are wearing wooden-soled shoes. There is an alarming amount of drunkenness in London. The American soldiers seem to be getting on better terms with the locals, perhaps having become more resigned to the climate etc. Air raids continue, but on a pitiful scale. I notice that many people feel sympathy for the Germans now that it is they who are being bombed—a change from 1940, when people saw their houses tumbling about them and wanted to see Berlin scraped off the map.

GEORGE ORWELL.

Evelyn Waugh: The Pillar of Anchorage House

Nigel Dennis

W

HEN Evelyn Waugh's last novel, *Put Out More Flags*, appeared in the summer of 1942, *The Retail Bookseller* summed it up for the American trade:

"The Waugh type of cleverness is for a definite market, faithful but limited."

It was a precise tribute to England's foremost contemporary comic novelist. Here, far more than in England, Waugh has tended to be a special taste established in the first years of Depression and savored devotedly by a handful of people through ten years of proletarian novels, monsters of historical romance, and dubious charts for liberal futures. Uneasily reviewed in the line of duty, this author of two incomparable period pieces (*Decline and Fall*, *Vile Bodies*) has received no serious recognition. Woolcott called Waugh the nearest thing to a genius the English 30's had produced, and chose *A Handful of Dust* as the best English novel in 100 years. But Woolcott called so many things so many things.

One of the problems has been what *The Retail Bookseller* blandly calls "the Waugh type of cleverness". The same descriptive terms have been used for Waugh by intellectuals who should know better. Waugh has been shrugged off on grounds that are his most serious claim to distinction. The nature of his best fiction; its fantastic gravity in the face of the ridiculous, its levity over accepted forms of seriousness, its high narrative flash-point accompanied by one sleight of hand after another—these admirable gifts of the satirical novelist have frightened even his admirers into the hole-and-corner approval that family men whisper behind their hands about prostitutes, but never admit to their wives. So rubbed away in Waugh's finished work are the pain and labor of the writing, that the artist is condemned as frivolous. He is frowned on for his dexterity when, five characters in each hand, he can develop, in smoothly interlocking conversations and exits and entries, the reader's understanding of his people, their im-

mediate situation, and the theme of the novel. He is mistrusted because he can pull anything from performing seals and oranges to acute major materials out of an air of nonsense at a second's notice, fit them perfectly into narrative-place, and flick them out again with none of the second-rate writer's passion for clutching his material. Time and place are fixed with admirably brief descriptive passages, only to be ignored and ridiculed by characters whose hand-to-mouth thinking and behavior make a mockery of established form.

If Waugh's unique combination of daring, control, and side-glance exercises has caused him to be classed merely with tight-rope walkers, his subject matter, attitude, and choice of characters have been found equally damning. In a period that has rejoiced in solemnly attributing the most superficial accident to a basic historical condition, Waugh has preferred to indicate how a minor accident can render the important ridiculous. "[Basil] rejoiced, always, in the spectacle of women at a disadvantage: thus he would watch, in the asparagus season, a dribble of melted butter on a [beautiful] woman's chin . . ." Where others have shown in a million ways the crushing effect of social forms on struggling individuals, Waugh, the lover of inanimate objects, has delighted in showing how valued material may be destroyed at a moment's whim by the wilful use of individual power. *Candide* is usually Waugh's central character—though his *Candide* may as easily be a house or a painting or a tradition as a man or a woman—and with the blandness of Goldsmith and the sophistication of Trollope he has liked to put rural innocence into the cruel hands of urban wise-guys, and to show, with sadistic pleasure, the helplessness of the intellectual confronted by the brute. Finally, in a period in which class tragedy superseded individual suffering, Waugh's sufferers and settings were stubbornly upper class. In the town it was Mayfair, in the country it was parkland; and the 'thirties were not a period which fostered aesthetic respect for both the young manhood of Studs Lonigan *and* the offspring of the landed gentry and new rich. The drip of butter on the face of beauty was inconspicuous against the monstrous social background.

But the ultimate fault was Waugh's. In the twelve years following his conversion to Catholicism, he produced a series of

novels, short stories and travel books in which his satire and outrageous burlesque of English society changed, as Dunstan Thompson has pointed out, to kindly parody, of the kind *Punch* delights in. He showed clearly that his rebelliousness was to be that of the palace revolutionary—limited by England's palace walls. Father Rothschild S. J., the motor-cycling Jesuit who pulled strings of Cabinet policy with priestly dexterity, rode off on his machine in a cloud of pity for young aristocrats and never re-appeared. Never again did the Evangelist, Mrs. Ape, and her "angels" sing "There Ain't No Flies on The Lamb of God." Gone was the immortal Captain Grimes—believed by awed small boys to have lost in action a leg that had, in fact, been the victim of a drunken meeting with a Liverpool trolley car. Gone, too, were the ice-cold portraits of the easy, friendly society mother retiring to a hidden office to interview applicants for her secret houses of prostitution, and the extraordinary terror of the few terse lines in which a well-born daughter, suddenly awaking to her fate, futilely begs her snobbish mother to help her escape from a socially desirable marriage to a man she despises. What Waugh wanted thereafter was to use the palace inmates as subjects for tragedy, not satire: but when he tried in *A Handful of Dust*, he failed because the field was too shallow. The nearest he came to success was in the short extract of an unpublished novel, which appeared in *Horizon* last year under the title "My Father's House." Here was a brilliant study of a Victorian painter watching his world crumbling about him: his huge canvases entitled "Agag Before Samuel" and "Feet of Clay" being pushed off the market by Gauguin's "disjointed negresses," his Victorian mansion becoming hemmed in by monster apartment houses panelled with green wood and infested with rats and prostitutes, his social status undermined when the politicians went into alliance "with the slaves." "'We [the gentry] are extinct already, I am a Dodo,' he used to say . . . 'You, my poor son, are a petrified egg.'"

II

"My Father's House". It is the most meaningful of all Waugh's titles and, with its summons to lament the past, it could stand as an invisible title to everything Waugh has written. Houses,

houses, houses—from the pages of *Decline and Fall*, *Vile Bodies*, *A Handful of Dust*, *Rossetti*, *Put Out More Flags*. Mostly they have been large country houses, often falling down or badly kept up. Sometimes they have been raped by vile bodies who have pulled them down and replaced them with modern horrors of chromium and colored slats. Sometimes they have been the individualistic creations of men like Rossetti and William Morris with massive, blackened furniture and immense appurtenances. Always the house has made the man; man has not existed apart from his roof any more than the rat has failed to swarm into the apartment house. And always the house has been a way of life for Waugh, desirable or detestable. He has dwelt on its driveways and park, the iron railings and stone walls that have stood between the house and the slaves; the carpets, busts and old priest-holes; the warm libraries where a dozing visitor is awoken by a padding maid with an afternoon tea in a silver pot surrounded by scones, relish, toast and cherry jam. For fifteen years Waugh has sung the house, and with it the precious furnishings he finds suited to it—the paintings that are not of disjointed negresses, the timbers that have been seasoned in estate barns, the owners who cherish it above themselves. And in this love of house, of continuous domicile and individual roof, Waugh appears for the defense in one of the most important struggles in English poetry and letters of the last 20 years. “My Father’s House” (it would be “my Mother’s” to many) is the starting point of England’s recent literary past. It has shaped the intellectuals’ outlook, their conduct, their England—indeed, the literary history of the ‘thirties can be written with the house of childhood as its center.

The young men who have written English poetry for the last ten years have been mostly the men of Waugh’s class, with gradations above and below. Their battle has been for self-emancipation; freedom, not from riches or love of grandeur but from the far more insidious influences of the houses of their birth and education. What appeared in their writings as a new faith in the proletariat and an enthusiasm for the urban under-privileged was, far more, an effort to purge the author’s own personality of its upper-class preferences and trained acceptance of the old, rural order; to bring the lagging instincts into line with the advancing intellect. The bonds that held the heart in a setting of lawns,

trees, cool drawing rooms and soft-spoken family friends were less evident but far more binding than the parallel ties of the public school. The intellectual pledged his new fidelity to the city, to the waste land that must recreated; he entered the woods only by charabanc. In *New Signatures*, the poets' first public avowal of their determination to achieve self-conversion, one finds the whole intimate and painful struggle with past allegiances, phrased usually as an appeal to the non-fighters rather than a lyric expression of the writers' own dilemma. And the recurring center is "my father's house". In Spender it was a warning to young men that

It is too late now to stay in those houses your fathers built . . .
It is too late to stay in great houses where the ghosts are prisoned
—those ladies like flies perfect in amber

In Day Lewis it was the lament of a landed mother for her son:

Warm in my walled garden the flower grew first.
Transplanted it ran wild on the estate.
Why should it ever need a new sun?
(. . . One day) He crossed the frontier and I did not follow:
Returning, spoke another language.

The strain is clear, too, in Auden's most famous sonnet:

. . . Publish each healer that in city lives
Or country houses at the end of drives;
Harrow the house of the dead; look shining at
New styles of architecture, a change of heart.

There was at issue a literal walking out from the paternal halls; Auden's "styles of architecture" were exactly that as well as symbols of the old and new in living. And in the new direction, there is clearly indicated the sharp line that had emerged to divide the intellectuals of the Left from such as Evelyn Waugh. Like these intellectuals Waugh saw the ghosts in the old houses, the flies lovely in amber; unlike them, he totally rejected the plea to "advance to rebuild". The ghosts must be materialized; or, if that were impossible, they must be preserved as the best available wraiths. In two brilliant satires, (*Decline and Fall*, *Vile Bodies*,) he had said what he thought of people who destroyed old houses; although his victims were of his own class, to say the least, he had pilloried them because they failed to see that their duty lay in preserving their country homes rather than in hell-raising in

Mayfair. He had a clear idea of what England's house should look like, of the people that should live in it, of the art that should grace its walls. The people were to be the ones whom Lady Circumference of *Vile Bodies* found attending a reception at Anchorage House, one of the last of London's great town houses. They were not the bloated great, with their dubiously-acquired fortunes and reverberating soap-and-brewery titles. They were the relatively small fry:

... a great concourse of pious and honorable people (many of whom made the Anchorage House reception the one outing of the year), their womenfolk well gowned in rich and durable stuffs, their menfolk ablaze with orders; people who had represented their country in foreign places and sent their sons to die for her in battle, people of decent and temperate life, uncultured, unaffected, unembarrassed, unassuming, unambitious people, of independent judgment and marked eccentricities, kind people who cared for animals and the deserving poor, brave and rather unreasonable people, that fine phalanx of the passing order, approaching, as one day at the Last Trump they hoped to meet their Maker, with decorous and frank cordiality to shake Lady Anchorage by the hand at the top of her staircase.

We know at once who these ideal souls are: they are the landed, and would-be landed, gentry of England, the ones to whom "father" made his pledge of fidelity, though he professed to see them as dead as dodos, and their offspring as petrified eggs. They are that rigid backbone of England's rural constituencies—the conservative squirearchy (even when their houses are small) on whose paternalism the existence of millions of rural Englishmen depends.

What of the art that these squires should cherish? Waugh had chosen that in the first book he ever wrote: *Rossetti: His Life and Works*. His squire was to enliven his solidity with Pre-Raphaelite dreams of knighthood. The Pre-Raphaelite struggle against materialism—against the huge apartments "my father" hated, and industrialized living—Waugh made his own, ignoring Morris's socialism but accepting both the aesthetic and moral visions of the Pre-Raphaelite conception of medievalism, and relishing "the stimulus it gives to one's restiveness in an era of complete stultification." His world was not in negroid primitivism, but in such favorite paintings as Rossetti's *Marriage of St. George*,

and he quoted approvingly James Smetham's description of that odd hodge-podge of cluttered "medieval" objects:

One of the grandest things, like a golden, dim dream. Love 'credulous all gold', gold armour, a sense of secret enclosure in 'palace chambers far apart'; but quaint chambers in quaint palaces, where angels creep in through sliding panel doors, and stand behind rows of flowers, drumming on golden bells, with wings crimson and green . . .

"English Gothic" Waugh called it and, in *A Handful of Dust*, he lamented its passing, exiling the Squire who tried to restore it to the jungles of Brazil—where he perished by the fiendish torture of reading aloud to a lonely maniac the novels of the industrialized Charles Dickens.

III

The friendly Alun Lewis, writing recently in *The New Statesman*, opposed himself to critics who considered Waugh a reactionary. "Romantic" he believed to be the proper description. But in the years before the war, Waugh's "romanticism" flowed smoothly into a contemporary mainstream of which so-called romanticism was no more than tributary. Visiting Ethiopia at the time of Mussolini's invasion, he wrote enthusiastically of the caliber of the invading armies, and condemned Englishmen who failed to see in this new colonial regime "inestimable gifts of fine workmanship and clear judgment". (*Waugh in Abyssinia*) A trip to Mexico shortly before the war led him to write *Robbery Under the Law*—more discreetly titled in good-neighborly America, *Mexico, An Object Lesson*. This violent diatribe of a converted Catholic was more than an indignant protest against the humbling of the Catholic church under the Cardenas government. It was also an intricate defense of unromantic General Franco. But perhaps most tragic to Waugh was the awful fate of Mexico's huge estates. "My father's house" had been virtually destroyed; the fate of the English manorial holdings was here in evidence on a huge scale. With bitter anger, Waugh demanded more "discipline" of the *peon* and inevitably saw Mexico's poverty as resulting from the country's lack of a landed gentry.

It was then that he published his unromantic Conservative Creed:

I believe that man is, by nature, an exile . . . ; that his chances of happiness and virtue . . . generally speaking, are not much affected by the political and economic conditions in which he lives; . . . that the intellectual communists of today have personal, irrelevant grounds for their antagonism to society, which they are trying to exploit. I believe . . . that there is no form of government ordained from God as being better than any other; that the anarchic elements in society are so strong that it is a wholetime task to keep the peace. I believe the inequalities of wealth and position are inevitable and that it is therefore meaningless to discuss the advantages of their elimination; that men naturally arrange themselves in a system of classes; that such a system is necessary for any form of co-operative work . . . I do not think that British prosperity must necessarily be inimical to anyone else, but if, on occasions, it is, I want Britain to prosper and not her rivals . . . I believe that Art is a natural function of man; it so happens that most of the greatest art has appeared under systems of tyranny, but I do not think it has a connection with any particular system, least of all with representative government, as nowadays in England, America and France it seems popular to believe; artists have always spent some of their spare time in flattering the governments under whom they live, so it is natural that, at the moment, English, American and French artists should be volubly democratic.

It must have seemed to him that the ceiling of the whole world was descending in blocks and splinters on the sagging roof of the paternal home. At least, on leaving Ethiopia, he had been able to view with pride the efforts of British gentlemen to live like squires in Kenya. But all Mexico could give him was the hardly surprising "trust" of members of the Catholic laity, some "good company in the Ritz bar", and "a bottle of magnificent claret in Mexico City". To return to an England on the verge of war under that epitome of unknighly rule, Neville Chamberlain, must have been the last straw. A world in which radicals were still vociferous, disjointed negresses still in vogue, playboys making their last bids, and the young squires held in their tents by industrialists in black coats—this was surely England's lowest decline from Waugh's high standard of glory.

When Tory salvation came in the form of the Churchill government, Waugh recognized it instantly. Returning from the Middle East he wrote *Put Out More Flags*. "A new spirit" was "abroad in the land", and in dedicating his work to the new Prime Minister's son, Major Randolph Churchill M.P., of the 4th Hussars, Waugh apologized for the fact that he was not entirely contemporary in his approach. "These pages," he said, "may not be

altogether acceptable to your ardent and sanguine nature. They deal, mostly, with a race of ghosts, the survivors of the world we both knew ten years ago . . . but where my imagination still fondly lingers . . . These characters are no longer contemporary in sympathy; they were forgotten even before the war; but they lived on delightfully in holes and corners . . . Here they are in that odd, dead period before the Churchillian renaissance."

Who are these neglected phantoms with a low standard of living, from whom Waugh dissociates himself with such tolerant superiority? Most of them appear from Waugh's own sleeve; they are his own literary creations invoked from the pages of his own novels. And, despite the nostalgic tone of Waugh's dedicatory words, we quickly find that these ghosts are highly contemporary; that while some are to be exorcised forever, others are to be re-embodied into active elements of the "Churchillian renaissance."

The old gentlemen are out. The doddering ghosts of aristocracy who spent their paternal vitality serving the tradesmen, pandering to the slaves, and betraying the younger squirearchy—they are through and will haunt no more. Not so the playboys. With Waugh's aid they do penance for their wasted ghosthood, conquer their dissipation and are entered, like gentlemanly *condottieri*, into the "new spirit" of the age. Readers of early Waugh may remember, for instance, Alistair Digby-Vaine-Trumpington. Alistair was distinctly a "vile body". But now, his wife Sonia tells us:

. . . he was a much odder character than anyone knows. You remember that man who used to dress as an Arab and then went into the Air Force as a private because he thought the British government had let the Arabs down? . . . I believe Alistair felt like that. You see he'd never done anything for the country . . . I believe he thought that perhaps if he had done something perhaps there wouldn't have been any war . . . He went into the ranks as a kind of penance.

As Alistair, saved from wraithhood by consorting with the lowest type of soldier, kneels in confession, he must note with some surprise that his literary creator has set on their knees beside him a row of reformed rakes. There is Sonia, bearing Alistair the child she could never conceive in her ghostly period. There is Peter Pastmaster, who mixed cocktails so expertly at the age of fourteen, and played *Pop Goes the Weasel* on the school organ. There is Angela Lyne, who took veronal under Chamberlain.

There is even Angela's future husband, Basil Seal of *Black Mischief*, who carried self-interest to a sublime level of cruelty, and, before Chamberlain was ousted, conducted a virtually incestuous relationship with his sister while running a blackmail scheme based on the billeting of obnoxious slum children. The menfolk of this group of penitents are destined to join Waugh's own branch of the services, the Commandos—by Waugh's description a chummy sort of war club for reformed gentlemen. "Most of the war," explains Peter Pastmaster, "seems to consist of hanging about. Let's at least hang about with our own friends."

How well it has all worked out! These ghosts are ghosts no more; they have come through the hail of Spanish Loyalists, misguided intellectuals, decayed elder statesmen, enemies of the true faith, and are now ready to set a glowing seal on their creator's choice of life; to ride out of their English-Gothic castles—20th century Knight-Commandos going out to overthrow the ungentlemanly materialists of Nazidom.

Keeping their place till they return are the gentle Babbitts of the landed gentry. How near they came to ghosthood, those people of "decent and temperate life" we met ten years ago on the steps of Anchorage House! We saw them then in the London season; in *Put Out More Flags* they are back in their country homes, as though having caught the night train down. They are grooming "the splendid surface" of their lawns and devoutly working in the herbaceous borders; when "ice stood thick on the lily ponds . . . these good people fed the birds daily with crumbs from the dining-room table and saw to it that no old person in the village went short of coal."

The fate of permanent ghosthood is reserved for another group—England's younger intellectuals. These people have never before been mentioned in a Waugh novel; but they are Waugh's ghosts nonetheless, because the new signatures of most of them have stood on the wall to haunt him throughout his literary career. Now, the "Churchillian renaissance" has delivered them into his hands. The most opportunistic playboys—the men who drove the Gothic squire to his death in *A Handful of Dust*—may rise to the occasion in a time of crisis, but no radical is to be anything but a ghost beside the "new spirit". In prose that varies from childishness to a very high standard, Waugh throws his great capacity

for savagery against the most thoughtful enemies of "my father's house". With Auden and Isherwood he plays with the happy cruelty of a slightly demented child, taunting them with Spain, reminding them in New York of their past devotion to contemporary happenings, recalling, for comparison, "Socrates marching to the sea with Xenophon . . . Horace singing the sweetness of dying for one's country". And to make sure the board is swept clean, Waugh rids England of the esthete, shown in the person of Ambrose Silk, one of Waugh's most able and cynical characterizations, combining low birth, Jewish blood, homosexuality and cowardice with decadent memories of Gertrude Stein, Cocteau and Diaghilev. Face to face with the aristocratic Commando, Basil Seal, Ambrose is utterly routed.

This is more than a parable of war. The conflict between the esthete and the man of action is Waugh's own conflict. For Ambrose, with his Yellow Book dreams, embodies so many of the anti-materialistic, esthetic elements that Waugh himself has advanced, and consequently there are moments in *Put Out More Flags* when Ambrose is more pitied than censured by his author. But the point is that estheticism is not in future to be sullied by such as Ambrose. In a typically Waugh scene we are shown Basil's mistress picking the monogram off the departed Ambrose's crepe-de-chine underwear, and replacing it with a "B" for Basil.

IV

In *Horizon*, in a discussion of the sterility of "Puritan" poetry, Waugh presented his view of the proper function of the contemporary poet. "I think it is time," he said:

we made up our minds that poetry is one of the arts which has died in the last eighty years . . . The men who write your 'poetry' seems to me to be trying to live on the prestige of a dead art. Shelley talked of poets as the legislators of the world, and they seem to have applied this to themselves without any justification at all . . . Here we reach a deep cause of Puritanism—the poetic sense of responsibility. Let us tell the poets at once that no one need legislate who does not want to . . . All we ask of the poets is to sing."

Horizon's editor rejects Waugh's charge that poetry is dead. But he tells us that "the sophisticated intellectual poetry of the 'twenties is exhausted," that poetry was "taken down a cul de sac to get away from the Georgians". The 'thirties gave it inadequate revival in "academic socialism." Now, "we are waiting for a new

romanticism to bring it back to life." This will happen when "the tide of events sweeps round the lonely stumps on which our cormorants have been sitting and gives them a fishing ground." Meantime, editors must publish, among other things, "poems which reflect the lyrical influence of Lorca rather than the intellectual one of Auden, Eliot or Rilke." Only the "best work" of the best younger poets— Spender, Empson, Thomas, Barker, Rodgers, Vernon Watkins "must be encouraged."

These remarks, so valuable if they had been made in the '30's, are worrying at the present moment. Just what do they indicate? That the lyric poet, the domestic novelist and the literary essayist are to supersede writers whose only virtue is political propriety? Or, as seems more probable, that the editorial political narrowness of the '30's must give way to a new narrowness? In exchange for Puritanism are we to have, as Dali suggests, "an individualistic tradition . . . Catholic, aristocratic, and probably monarchic"?

The "Churchillian renaissance" is abroad in England. Behind its dashing skirts sit the pre-war industrialists, looking forward to the day when adventurous leadership will give place again to the 1922 Committee, and the demands of generals be as remote as reminiscent book reviews in the *Times Literary Supplement*. The call to poets to cease from legislating and to "sing", is invariably made loudest by men like Waugh, who cannot put pen to paper without legislating. And before we give Auden a military funeral and fire a volley into his grave, it will be well to look back at the lessons of the '30s and not throw the value out with the ignorance. The struggle to leave "my father's house" was no exercise in "academic socialism", however much it became inter-mixed with the sycophantic intolerance of fellow travellers. If, in the name of art and "singing", the intellectual is to sit passively waiting for the waters to bring him fish, the "romantic revival" is likely to be one-sided in the creels it fills. To fail to appreciate the Waughs of literature was a crime of the 30's; to accept their dicta as a way of life will be the crime of the 40's. In gloomier moments one pictures the abashed intellectuals returning like prodigals to the halls they abandoned, and singing as they polish their pedigrees. Gothic texts will line the walls where *New Signatures* once hung. To the cheers of his tenantry the reformed rake will return from the Commandos to take up his squireship of "English Gothic".

Letters from Prison*

Rosa Luxemburg

Fortress of Wronke in Posen
January 7, 1917

HÄNSCHEN: today is Sunday, a day that has always been fatal for me, and for the first time since I've been here I feel "as poor and forsaken as that God from Nazareth." But just today, to make up for it, I had the feeling: I must write to Hänschen. You aren't angry with me for being silent so long? In spite of my silence, I've been so happy whenever there was a letter from you. I've laughed like a fool over them and thought of you a good deal. Hänschen, when will we have our lovely evenings in Südende again,—you reading Goethe to me in between countless cups of tea, and I lying on the sofa, happy and lazy, with Mimi; or else arguing about God and the world, until midnight when Hänschen takes a desperate look at the clock, throws on his hat and dashes off to the station at a wild gallop, whistling Figaro back to me from the corner? After the war I'm afraid, there will be no more quiet and genial comfort. And, God, I have so little inclination for the tussle that's coming. For ever and ever to be surrounded by those same charming figures, the same Ad. Hoffm. with his "native" Berlin wit and his inexpressibles (begging your pardon) that look like two collapsing Doric columns, and forever to be looking at father Pfannkuch and his same old brown velour hat with the broad brim. It makes me shudder to think that till the end of my life I shall have these things around me. "Thrones crash, empires burst asunder," the world stands on its head, and when it's all over I'm still stuck in the same "vicious circle," the same few dozen people— *et plus ça change plus ça reste tout à fait la même chose*. So be prepared for anything: I still have no idea what's going to become of me, but as you know, I'm a land of unlimited possibilities. But for you at last I have found a suitable occupation. That is—*entendons-nous*—an avocation. Your vocation remains as before, casting light and radiance into my earthly existence, or as you gallantly call it in your last (received) letter: being my court jester. Aside from that, you should create a genre not yet represented in German literature: the literary and historical essay. For this form is not, as a Franz Blei imagines, a refuge for intellectual impotence in all other fields, but an art form as strict and justified as the song in music. Why is the essay, so brilliantly represented in England and France, totally lacking in Germany? I think it is because the Germans possess too much pedantic thoroughness and too little intellectual grace.

*This selection of letters by Rosa Luxemburg, the great socialist leader who was assassinated in 1919, is taken for an unpublished manuscript brought to this country by a European refugee. The letters are addressed to a friend serving in the Germany army. Another group of Luxemburg prison-letters appeared in the June, 1938 issue of *Partisan Review*.—The Editors.

After the war, sir, we'll have to put an end to your sipping around in every flower bed like a butterfly. Please send for Macaulay in the Tauchnitz edition (*Historical and Critical Essays*) and read him carefully.

The drama in S. was a harder blow to me than you imagine. A blow to my peace and my friendship. You will speak to me of pity. You know that I feel and suffer with every creature; when a wasp slips into my ink-well, I wash it three times in luke-warm water and dry it in the sun on my balcony, to give back its bit of life. But tell me, why shouldn't I, in this case, feel pity for the *other* side, that is being roasted alive and passes through the seven circles of the German hell on every God-given day? And besides, my pity as my friendship have definite limits: they end exactly where vileness begins. My friends must have their accounts in clean order, and not only in their public, but in their private and intimate lives as well. But to thunder big words in public about the "freedom of the individual," and in private to enslave a human soul out of mad passion,—that I neither understand nor forgive. In all this, I miss the two basic elements of the feminine nature: kindness and pride. Good God, if even from a distance I suspect that someone doesn't like me, my very thoughts shun his company like frightened birds; even to let my eyes rest on him seems to me presumptuous. How can one let oneself go in such a way? You will speak to me of terrible suffering. Well, let me tell you, Hänschen, if my best friend were to say: I have the choice between doing something vile or dying of grief, I would answer with icy calm: then die. With *you* I have a calm, comforting conviction that you are incapable, even in thoughts, of doing anything vile, and even though your temperament, as blond as a Vienna roll, and your eternally cool hands often irritate me. I say: blessed be lack of temperament if it is guaranty that you will never storm like a panther over the happiness and peace of other people. But as a matter of fact, that has nothing to do with temperament, you know I have enough of that to set a prairie on fire, yet the peace and the simple wish of every other person is to me a sacred thing; I would rather let it kill me than defile it. Enough of this, I won't say a word to anyone but you about the dreary business.

I haven't thanked you yet for the Santa Claus. Of course, I should have been happier to get it, not "*in nuce*" but all packed up with articles of your choosing; but from that one-horse town, I know, the most you could have sent me would have been your piano or your orderly, and for them I haven't room. When are you going to get the war over, so we can go to hear Figaro again? Ah, I have my suspicions about you. You leave victory over the French to others and content yourself with quieter victories over the French girls, *petit vaurien*. And that's why the war isn't getting anywhere. But I will stand for no "annexations," do you hear? And above all I request a detailed report and a "complete, penitent confession." Write me direct to Wronke in Posen, Fortress, Dr. P. Lübeck. Write soon. Yes, I forgot: I am doing well here, don't worry about me. Send me more pictures of yourself and your nag.

Affectionately,

Your R.

March 5, 1917 (in honor of the day) *

My dear Hänschen:

Your remarks about my impulsiveness, youthfulness and such flattering things are based on a misapprehension. In the first place I *did* write you,—a lovely letter eight pages long,—only I didn't send it off (as proof I enclose the drawing that graced it, perhaps you'll like it). In the second place, I lived from hour to hour in the idea—suggested by my longing—that you would arrive here any day in the flesh. But it seems that Herr von Kessel found out how he could touch my sorest spot, and wants to put me to the test to see whether I can “hold out.” Don't make the holding out harder for me by being angry, but keep on writing,—be kind and patient with me even if I am not worth it.

Actually I am going through a rather hard period now. It is just the same as last year in the Barnim Strasse: for seven months I keep my chin up, in the eighth and ninth my nerves suddenly fail me. Every day that I have to live through becomes a little mountain, that must be arduously climbed, and every trifle irritates me painfully. In five days exactly eight months of the second year of my seclusion will be over. Then I am sure things will look up of their own accord, just like last year, especially with spring coming. Everything would be much easier if I only didn't forget the basic commandment I have set myself for life: the main think is to be *good*. Simply and plainly to be good, that is what binds and unbinds all things, it is better than all cleverness and self-righteousness. But who should remind me of this when Mimi even is not here? At home she so often led me back to the right path with a long, silent glance that again and again (in spite of you) I had to kiss her and say: You are right, to be good is the main thing. If sometimes from my words or silence you find me spiteful or embittered, only remind me of Mimi's verdict and—march ahead of me with your example: *you* be good, even if I don't deserve it . . . Affectionately,

Your R.

Wronke in Posen, Fortress
(March 8, 1917)

Hänschen, of the thousand things I have to tell you, one more handful. Now I am back in a calmer frame of mind, and so I will write you. That letter I tore up, I didn't send it for fear of making you sad; in black and white a passing depression seems much more tragic than it really is. Now I am writing you mainly for the following reason. Fräulein Mathilde J., who is here, is going to Posen and hopes to see you; I put her up to it, feeling that it would be all right with you. She will give you a detailed account of me and bring you my boiling hot greetings,—but something else too. And this something is—my manuscript of the “*Antikritik*,” my reply to Eckstein, Bauer and Co., in defense of my book on accumulation. You, unhappy man, are elected to be the second reader of this opus (the first of course was Mehring who read the manuscript several times and the first time called it “simply brilliant, a really magnificent, stirring achievement,” without its equal since the death of Marx; later—meanwhile we had had a passing “growl,” as he

*Rosa's birthday.

calls it—he expressed himself with greater moderation . . .) Actually I am rather proud of the work and feel sure it will survive me. It is far more mature than the “Accumulation” itself: I have brought the form to the greatest simplicity, it is without incidentals, without coquetry and flim-flam, simple, reduced to essential lines; you might say it was “naked” as a block of marble. In general, that is how my taste runs today, to esteem only what is simple, quiet and broad, in scientific work as in art. That is why the famous first volume of Marx’s *Capital*, overloaded as it is with rococo ornaments in the Hegelian style, is now a horror to me (from the party standpoint the penalty for this is five years in the workhouse and ten years loss of civil rights . . .) Of course the reader, to have a scientific appreciation of my *Antikritik*, must have economics in general and Marxist economics in particular at his fingertips. And how many such mortals are there today? Not half a dozen. From this standpoint my words are a luxury article and ought to be printed on hand-made paper. But the *Antikritik* at least is entirely free from the algebraic formulae which create such a panic in the “simple reader.” On the whole, I think you will understand the thing. What Mehring most praised was “the crystal clarity and transparency of presentation.” So you must read it and give me your opinion “as a simple man of the people.” With regard to the artistic side of it, your opinion is of the greatest value to me. But at the same time I want to see how much of it you will understand. So rub your eyes and get to work. *Surge puer*, or if you can’t do that, read it lying down, but do get started and write me how it impresses you. After all one more little taste of economics won’t hurt you.

Ah, Hänschen, if only the winter were over. This weather crushes me, at present I can bear no hardness, either in men or in nature. Each year at this time I used to begin my travel preparations, for by the 7th or 10th of April I was always by the Lake of Geneva. Now I haven’t seen it for three years. Oh how blue and beautiful it is. Do you remember what a surprise it is, when after the barren stretch from Bern to Lausanne and one last dreadfully long tunnel, you suddenly hover over the broad blue surface of the lake. Every time my heart opens like a butterfly. And then the magnificent ride from Lausanne to Clarens with the tiny little stations every twenty minutes; far below by the water a cluster of little houses grouped around a white church, the calm, singing cry of the conductor, and then the station bell begins to ring, three times, and again three times, and again—the train begins slowly to move, but the bell goes on tinkling, so bright and gay. And as you ride on, the blue mirror of the lake keeps shifting its surface, sometimes it slants upward, sometimes downward, and below, the little steamers crawl along like beetles fallen in the water, dragging a long train of white foam after them. And across the lake you see the abrupt white mountain wall, usually veiled in blue mist at the bottom, so that the upper, snowy parts hover unreal in the sky. And over it all, the great dazzling Dent du Midi. Good Lord, when shall I spend April there again? Each time, the air and calm and gayety are like balm pouring into my soul. In my Chailly sur Clarens the vineyards are still overgrown with last year’s weeds. They are just beginning to hoe them. I can still saunter through the vineyards,

and pick the red dead-nettles and the fragrant sapphire-blue mascaris that grow wild there in unlimited quantities. At eleven o'clock, lunch is brought up for the peasants, the father in shirt-sleeves puts down his spade and sits on the ground, and his wife and children squat around him; the basket is opened and the family consumes the meal in silence. The father wipes the sweat from his forehead with his sleeve, for here in the vineyard the April sun is good and hot. And I lie silent nearby. I let the sun warm me all through, blink at the vintner and his family, and gnaw on a blade of grass, not a single thought in my head, but in my whole body the single feeling: oh Lord, how beautiful the world is, and life. And up on the Col de Jamen a little train climbs up from the Glion like a dark caterpillar, above it in the air a little veil of smoke, fluttering in the air like a departing friend waving in the distance . . .

Hänschen, adieu,

R.

Dear Hänschen:

In the midst of my fine, painfully built-up equilibrium, yesterday before going to sleep I was again seized by a despair much blacker than the night. And today is another gray day, instead of sun a cold east wind . . . I feel like a frozen bumble-bee: did you ever find such a bumble-bee in the garden, in the first frosty autumn mornings, lying on its back in the grass, as still as death, with its little legs pulled in and its fuzz covered with frost. Only when the sun warms it through, do the legs slowly begin to stir and stretch, then the little body rolls over and finally starts to buzz and lifts itself heavily into the air. It was always my business to kneel down over these frozen bumble-bees and rouse them to life with the warm breath of my mouth. If only the sun would awaken poor me from my deathly chill. Sometimes I struggle against the devil within me, like Luther—with my inkwell. You are my victim and will have to stand up under a barrage of letters. By the time you have loaded your big gun, I'll have given you such a shower with my small calibers that you'll be scared out of your wits. Incidentally—if you load your cannon with the same rapidity at the front, our present retreat on the Somme and Ancre really doesn't surprise me, and *you* will have it on your conscience if we have to make peace without annexing fair Flanders . . .

I never experienced a spring so consciously and in such deep draughts as last year just at this time. Perhaps because it was after a year in a cell, or because I now know every shrub and every weed in detail, so that I can follow their growth exactly. Do you remember how only a few years ago we tried to guess what a certain yellow-flowering shrub in Südende was? You "suggested" calling it "laburnum." Of course it was nothing of the sort. How happy I am that three years ago I suddenly flung myself into botanizing, as in everything with all my fire, my whole being, so that I forgot the world, the party, my work, and day and night only the one passion filled me: to wander around in the springtime fields, to gather armfuls of plants, to come home and arrange them, identify them and enter them in my notebooks. I lived that whole spring as if in a fever, how I suffered when I had some new plant before me and for a long time couldn't identify and classify it; in such cases

I almost fell in a faint, and Gertrude got so angry she threatened to "take away" the plants. But now, to make up for it, I am at home in the green realm, I have stormed it with passion, and everything that seizes you with such fire has firm roots within you.

Last spring I had a partner in these wanderings: Karl L. Liebknecht. You doubtless know how he had been living for years: nothing but parliament, sessions, commissions, conferences, always rushing, always on the jump from the city railway to the street-car, from the street-car to a cab, all his pockets stuffed full of note-books, both arms full of newspapers which he had just bought and he couldn't possibly find time to read, body and soul covered with the dust of the streets, yet always with the amiable young laugh on his face. Last spring I made him pause a little and remember that there is a world apart from the Reichstag and the Landtag, and several times he strolled with me and Sonya through the fields and the Botanical Gardens. He could take as much pleasure as a child at the sight of a birch tree with young catkins. Once we hiked through the fields to Marienfelde. You know the way too—do you remember—the two of us once went there in the fall, we had to walk through the stubble. But last April with Karl it was in the morning and the fields were covered with the fresh green of the winter plantings. A balmy fitful wind chased gray clouds back and forth across the sky, and the fields now gleamed in bright sunshine, now turned emerald green in the shadow,—it was glorious, and we tramped along in silence. Suddenly Karl stopped and began to take strange leaps, but his face remained serious. I watched him in amazement, I was even a little frightened. "What's the matter?" I asked him. "I'm so blissfully happy," he answered, and of course both of us couldn't help laughing like mad.

Affectionately,

R.

You call me the "fairest jewel" in the necklace of Hindenburg's apes from Africa and Asia. No, you are mistaken. By official statement I am *no* "prisoner of war." Proof: I have to stamp my letters.

Wronke i. P. April 5, 1917

Dear Hänschen. Good morning. May my little arrow nail you right at your threshold, bring you heartiest Easter greeting from Wronke and many thanks for three letters and six splendid volumes of Grillparzer. First, to set your mind at rest: I have punctually received everything you sent, except for the one mysterious letter of the 20th, which strayed off somewhere, which after all can happen "in the best of families." So you can keep on writing without concern; as a check, let us *number* the letters (not post-cards) from now on; but you yourself must make a note of the numbers, so as to create no confusion . . .

Hänschen, a wasp. Really, the first slender young wasp, apparently born this morning, is buzzing here in my room. She flew in through the open window and flung herself at once on the closed upper pane. An inch lower the window is open wide, but she stubbornly clings to the upper pane and keeps sliding up and down with an angry buzzing, as though someone were to blame for her being so stupid. Oh how lovely this dull stubborn buzzing is, how homelike it sounds. It reminds one so of summer, heat, my open balcony in Südende with the broad view of

rolling fields and clumps of trees, of Mimi lying lazy in the sun, wrapped up like a soft little bundle, blinking up at the buzzing wasp. And now I have the same work as every other summer: I must climb up on the chair—even so, I hardly reach the uppermost pane—and carefully catch the wasp and send her out into the open, otherwise she'll torture herself half to death on the glass. They never do anything to me; out of doors they even sit down on my lips, and it tickles; but I am afraid to hurt *her* when I take hold of her. But finally I succeed and suddenly it is still in the room. Only in my ears and heart a sunny echo still sounds. Hänschen, you must be happy, life is so beautiful. The wasp has said so again, and she knows.

Best greetings to your old gentleman and your aunt.

R

Wronke, May 12, 1917

Dear Hans:

Received No. 5, many thanks; I am waiting for your stylistic corrections (in part, as I see, they refer to oversights on the part of the typist). Your remark that some places in the *Antikritik* are so mangled as to be unintelligible, is making me revise the thing myself after all. Otherwise I am never able to re-read anything once it is written. The stronger I experience a thing while writing, the more it is over and done with afterward. I know, Hänschen, that I write on economic things for six persons, but actually I write them only for one person: myself. The time when I was writing the *Accumulation of Capital* was one of the happiest of my life. I really lived as though intoxicated, day and night I saw and heard nothing beside this problem unfolding so beautifully before me, and I don't know which gave me greater pleasure: the process of thinking, when I strolled slowly up and down, dragging a complex question with me through the room, attentively observed by Mimi who lay on the red plush table cover, her paws drawn up under her, following my wanderings with her intelligent face,—or the creation, the literary forming with pen in hand. Do you know that I wrote the whole thirty galleys in four months without stopping—an unheard of speed—and sent it directly to the printer's without once reading through the rough draft. It was pretty much the same in the Barnim Strasse with the *Antikritik*. And then, after a work so strongly experienced, I lose all interest in it, so much so that I hardly bothered about a publisher for it. Of course, in view of my "circumstances" in the last year and a half, this was rather difficult. You definitely overestimate Eckstein. His "criticism" was nothing but revenge for long and vain attempts at friendship, sharply rebuffed by me, and it was this transference of the "all too human" to the Alpine regions of pure science that filled me with such contempt for him. As a matter of fact, he could also be very charming and witty. Once at the Kautskys, when I was making desperate efforts in the vestibule to get my jacket down from the clothes tree, cursing my Lilliputian dimensions, he gallantly held out the jacket and smilingly muttered Wolf's song: "*Auch kleine Dinge können uns entzücken . . .*" (Little things can delight us too.) (You know that Hugo Wolf was allied with the Eckstein household in Vienna and is the family god.) Your idea of my writing a book about Tolstoi doesn't appeal to me in the

least. For whom? What for, Hänschen? Everyone can read Tolstoi's books, and anyone to whom they do not impart the strong breath of life will not get it by commentaries. Can you "explain" to anyone what Mozart's music is? Can you "explain" to anyone wherein the magic of life consists, if he himself does not sense it in the smallest and most everyday things, or rather: if he does not bear it in himself: And for that reason I regard the whole gigantic Goethe literature, for instance, (i.e. the literature about Goethe) as a waste of paper, and it is my opinion that far too many books have been written; from sheer literature people forget to look at the beautiful world.

Since the first we have been having a series of sunny days; as I wake up, the first ray of sunlight greets me, for my windows face the east. In Süden, where my place, as you know, is like a lantern, open to the sun from all sides, these morning hours are very lovely. After breakfast I would usually take my paper-weight, a crystal prism with the countless edges and corners, and set it in the sun. The light broke up into a hundred little splashes of rainbow on the walls and ceiling. Mimi looked on with enthusiasm, especially when I moved the prism and made the spots of color race along the wall and dance about. At first she ran and jumped and tried to catch them, but soon she found out that they were "nothing," just an optical illusion, and after that she sat motionless, following the dance with merry eyes. We got delightful effects when one of the little rainbows fell on a white hyacinth or on the marble head over the desk, or on the big bronze clock in front of the mirror. The neat sun-filled room with the bright carpet breathed peace and well-being, through the open balcony door you heard only the twittering of the sparrows, the hum of the street-car gliding by from time to time, or the bright metallic tapping of the workers mending the rails somewhere. Then I took my hat and went out into the fields to see what had grown during the night, and to gather fresh juicy grass for Mimi. Here, too, I go out in the little garden right after breakfast and have a wonderful occupation: watering my "plantation" outside the window. I sent for a pretty little watering can, and I have to run back and forth to the trough a dozen times before the border is moist enough. The spray sparkles in the morning sun, and the drops tremble for a long while on the pink and blue hyacinths which are already half open. Why am I sad in spite of all this? I almost think I overestimated the power of the sun in the sky, it can shine like this and sometimes it doesn't warm me at all, if my own heart lends it no warmth.

R.

Wronke, June 23, 1917.

Hänschen, good morning, here I am again. Today I feel so lonely, I must refresh myself a little by chatting with you. Today I spent the siesta prescribed by the doctor lying on the sofa, I read newspapers and decided at half past two that it was time to get up. A moment later I fell asleep and had a wonderful dream, very lively but of uncertain content. I remember only that someone nice was with me, that I touched his lips with my finger and asked him: "Whose mouth is that?" He answered: "Mine." "Oh, no," I cried laughing, "that mouth belongs to me." I awoke from laughing at this nonsense and looked at the clock: it

was still half past two, so apparently my long dream had lasted only a second, but it left me with the feeling of a precious experience, and I went back to the garden comforted. Soon another lovely thing happened to me: a robin sat down on the wall right behind me and sang to me a little. Most of the birds now are taken up entirely with family cares, it's only here and there that one sings for a moment. This robin had visited me several times at the beginning of May. I don't know if you are really familiar with this bird and his song. Like so many other things, it was only here that I really came to know him, and I love him far more than the famous nightingale. The nightingale with his brilliant note is too much of a prima donna for me, he calls to mind an audience, loud triumphs, hymns of praise. The robin has a small delicate voice and sings a strange intimate melody that sounds like an up-beat, a little piece of reveille; do you remember the trumpet note in the distance in *Fidelio*, that breaks the tension and seems to split the darkness of night? The robin's song sounds something like that, only it is sung in a gentle tremolo of infinite sweetness, giving an effect of vagueness, like a memory lost in dream. My heart is convulsed with joy and pain when I hear this song, and at once I see my life and the world in a new light, as if the clouds were breaking and a bright sunbeam were falling on the earth.

Today I felt so soft, so mild from this little song on the wall that couldn't have lasted longer than a minute. At once I regretted all the harm I had ever done to anyone and all my harsh thoughts, and I decided to be good again, simply good at any price: that is better than "being right" and booking every little injury. And then I decided to write you this very day, though since yesterday I have a little pad on my desk with seven precepts by which I expect to live from now on, and the first is: "Write no letters." So you see, that is how I keep my iron precepts, that is how weak I am. If, as you write in your last letter, the stronger sex like women best when they show themselves weak, you must be delighted with me: ah, I am so weak here, weaker than I would like to be. I must say, though, that your childish lips spoke truer than you suspected. In this connection I had a funny experience. You must have seen Camille Huysmans at the Copenhagen Congress, the tall young fellow with the dark curls and the typical Flemish face? He is now one of the leading lights at the Stockholm Conference. For ten years the two of us belonged to the International Bureau and for ten years we hated one another, in so far as my "pigeon heart" (the expression comes from—Heinrich Schultze) is capable of such a feeling. Why, it is hard to say. I think he can't bear women who are active in politics, and I guess his impertinent face got on my nerves. It so happened that at the last session in Brussels, which in view of the imminence of war took place at the end of July 1914, we were together for a few hours. We were sitting in a fashionable restaurant and there was a vase of gladioli on the table; I was immersed in the flowers and took no part in the political discussion. Then the conversation turned to my departure, and my helplessness in "earthly things" came to light, my eternal need of a protector to buy my ticket, put me on the right train, collect my lost suitcases—in short my whole reprehensible weakness which has given

you so many merry moments. Huysmans watched me in silence the whole time, and in an hour the hatred of ten years was transformed into glowing friendship. It was laughable. At last he had seen me weak and was in his element. At once he took my destiny in hand, dragged me to his place for a midnight supper with Anseele, the charming little Walloon, brought me a cat, played and sang Mozart and Schubert. He has a good piano and a pleasant tenor voice, it was a revelation to him that music is the breath of life to me. He sang Schubert's *Grenzen der Menschheit*. "*Und mit uns spielen Wolken und Winde*".* He sang a few times with his funny Flemish pronunciation. Then of course he brought me to the train, carrying my bag himself; he sat down in the compartment with me and suddenly decided: "*Mais il est impossible de vois laisser voyager seule*." As though I were really a babe in arms. I barely managed to persuade him not to accompany me at least to the German border; he jumped out only when the train was beginning to move and called after me: "*Au revoir à Paris*." For we were supposed to hold a congress in Paris in two weeks. That was on July 31. But when my train arrived in Berlin, the mobilization was in full swing and two days later poor Huysmans' beloved Belgium was occupied. I couldn't help repeating: "*Und mit uns spielen Wolken und Wind*."

In two weeks a full year of my imprisonment will be over, or—except for the little interruption,—two full years. Oh how good an hour or two of simple conversation would feel. In the visiting hours, of course, we just run hastily through the business matters, and most of the time I'm on pins and needles. And aside from that, I neither see nor hear a human soul.

Now it is nine at night, but of course as light as day. It is so still here around me, only the ticking of the clock and in the distance the muffled barking of a dog. How strangely homelike this distant barking of dogs at evening in the country. At once I see a comfortable peasant's hut, a man in shirtsleeves standing in the doorway, with a pipe in his mouth, chatting with an old woman from the neighborhood; from inside bright children's voices and the clatter of dishes, and outside the smell of ripe wheat and the first hesitant croaking of the frogs . . .

Adieu, Hänschen

R.

*"And the clouds and winds play with me."

(Translated from the German by Ralph Mannheim)

Announcement

The Editors are pleased to announce that Mr. Delmore Schwartz will join the staff of PARTISAN REVIEW beginning next issue.

Books

Brahmin In the Forest

THERE HAVE BEEN many serious exaggerations in the growth of Francis Parkman's reputation as an historical writer. But it is not, I feel, mere critical extravagance which has made the various judgments so curiously difficult. Henry Adams had put him "at the head of American historians." More recently F. O. Matthiessen referred to Parkman's celebrated chronicles of the French, Indian and British struggle for the North American continent as "the most imaginative work of history we have yet had"—yet proceeded to document the "imaginative vitality" of the American renaissance as "the energetic desire to master history by repossessing all the resources of the hidden past in a timeless and heroic present." The body of Parkman commentaries, it has seemed to me, has been sustained by just such disengaged superlatives. It is almost as if Parkman students have sedulously avoided any concrete analyses for fear of what might be disclosed. Francis Parkman, genius though he was, was an historian without philosophical intelligence, interpretive power, or genuine imaginative qualities. And who indeed could have been further from Emerson's notion that "the use of history is to give value to the present hour", or Thoreau's singular 'renaissance' prejudice that "this was the heroic age itself . . . for the hero is commonly the simplest and obscurest of men"?

It is to be regretted that the first modern biography of Parkman, recently published,* did not address itself with any real subtlety or even seriousness to the basic problems of the historian's classic narrative and his strange, twisted personality. Mr. Mason Wade went along his scholarly, competent and plodding way pretty much as he did in his work on Margaret Fuller. The Fuller book found its original cue in Van Wyck Brooks' *Flowering*, and the Parkman book in its turn was prompted by *Indian Summer*. From Brooks apparently Wade has picked up a small talent for mellow exposition, and a terminological sharpness (borrowed from the second volume of V. L. Parrington) serves as something of a critical change of pace. So we are provided with the remarkable and not unoriginal story of a man who was constantly becoming "a citizen of the world" at the same time as he was "caught in Brahmin snobbery", who remained "a patrician" through a long lifetime during which he was supposed to be learning "what it was to be an American"! The Wade biography has of course none of the "timeliness" for which the author finds himself compelled to make elaborate argument; but its very publication and distribution are perhaps of sufficient importance to sustain these special reconsiderations of the Parkman story.

When in 1848 young Parkman had returned from the West and

**Francis Parkman: Heroic Historian*. By Mason Wade. Viking. \$4.50.

published his *Oregon Trail*, he was already a sick man. Most of the rest of his life (which was somehow stretched out into the seventieth year) was spent in a semi-invalidism, visited by insomnia, gout, rheumatism, and a flexible neurosis about his ability to read, write, or walk. Documents, notes, new source-materials were read to him by assistants, a few pages at a time. Agents ransacked the great libraries and archives of the world to establish his scholarship. Like Proust in his cloistered Paris apartment, Parkman (when he was not on the trail) was bound to his bed, wrote a few lines a day, dreamed of getting out again to explore the countryside. So did he produce the text of his dozen histories which remain today exciting chronicles of almost unerring accuracy and an extraordinary testament to a man's resourcefulness.

Francis Parkman's work reveals the historic inadequacies of the descriptive historian. He is sound without being illuminating. By giving us more details than we need, he offers us less than what we wanted to know. His distinction lay in the fact that he was no irresponsible historical romancer; his greatness, that he managed not merely to invoke but to actualize, render, almost fully express the past. No "pallid and emasculate" scholar—he had actually succeeded in following all the great paths of early American battle and exploration—Parkman gave a dimension of photographic realism to historical memories. But if seeing is believing, it is not necessarily understanding: his failure consists precisely in the obtuseness of the historian as mere spectator. Parkman triumphantly exhausted all the possibilities of the pictorial past, and Teggart's effective indictment of narrative-history as an instrument of social science is nowhere more appropriate. History, in Bury's commonplace, "is a science: nothing more, nothing less." If Parkman's work suggests that it could indeed be more, it certainly attests that it is often something less. For what we call historical science is not merely the developed methods of scholarly achievement. It involves also techniques of analysis and imaginative insight, a progressive experimentalism in social inquiry. And the element that seems to be particularly wanting in histories we recognize to be disoriented is a certain critical response to the American experience, an underlying awareness of process and change in our national life, a self-conscious historical sense.

The basic themes of Francis Parkman's own story have been obscured by the character of the new interest in his work. Current attention is clearly programmatic and not critical; its motives are narrow and nationalist; its thesis, an official insistence on Parkman's 'Americanism'. The visible surface of both his biography and bibliography reinforces this fashion. Unlike the studies of Prescott and Motley, Parkman's inquiry into the stories of the Mississippi and the St. Lawrence, Pontiac and LaSalle, the forest and the plains, was an American quest. In Europe, too, he appeared to be a New World spokesman. He lived for a week in a Passionist monastery near the Roman Colosseum, but in his narrow white-washed chamber, with its bed, chair, and table, its holy pictures, vessel of holy water and "hideous bleeding image of Christ", he would take out his copy of Cooper's *Pioneers*—"as a reminder of fresh air". At Milan's Lake Como he declared, "Give me Lake George and the smell of pine and fir!" He went on the Rhine and the Alps only to fancy him-

self "again in the American woods with an Indian companion". And even the Indian, whom he cordially disliked, became an Apollo in his eyes: he proudly recounted the story about West, who, when he first saw the Belvedere in the Vatican, exclaimed, "By God, a Mohawk!"

This national pull, however, was not a central force in his life, nor even in his European tour. He had really *fled* to the old world—in order "to be carried backwards in time", "to get for a while out of the nineteenth century". That flight indeed was the controlling motion of his career. He "detested" democracy, and had contempt for "material progress"; he hated "the Yankee spirit of improvement"; in his own America he found only "bloated wealth and envious poverty"; Jefferson he distrusted; Brook Farmers, Transcendentalists were just a collection of freaks and oddities; of the so-called Rent-rioters (revolting against oppressive feudal tenure) he observed, "I have never seen a viler concourse"; and the advance of the frontier, the great lyrical theme in the American democratic tradition, he saw as a kind of Barbarian Invasion of the West (*pioneers! O pioneers!*). Parkman was aware of the profound apathy of the America of his day in regard to its origins, and his singleminded devotion to the past became another weapon against the present. "I am a bad American," he admitted without anguish. Nothing could reconcile him to his own age. Only "a deep love of truth or of art", he felt, "could stand against it."

Nor was this art sprung from a simple psychology of escape. All of Parkman's autobiographical documents betray a dark, agonized disorder which Wade among others seems to have missed. Very early in his life, Parkman ("enamoured of the woods") had fixed his mind on "the history of the American forest". His thoughts, he writes of himself, "were always in the forests, whose features possessed his waking and sleeping dreams, filling him with vague cravings impossible to satisfy." In a reminiscing letter he confessed, "My theme fascinated me, and I was haunted with wilderness images day and night." A classmate of his had noted that "Parkman had 'Injuns on the brain' . . ."; on vacations he would tramp through the countryside with a gun at his side ("a man should always carry a gun", he explained). From his bed this scion of Puritan aristocracy once unburdened himself of "a burning desire to get among fevers and volcanoes, niggers, Indians and other outcasts of humanity, a restless fit which is apt to seize me at intervals . . ." Out of these inner sources Parkman's obsessive imagery developed.

The contradiction between his New England temperament and the almost warm and loving intimacy of his books renews the suggestion of the neurotic theme in his career. Sick and alone and depressed in his Boston house, he somehow resolved his personal crisis by the compensating excitement of adventurous Americana. Occasionally he rose to a self-conscious control of his predicament. In his Canadian chronicle he had been caught up by the spectacle of the dying Wolfe repeating Gray's *Elegy* and remarking, "Gentlemen, I would rather have written those lines than take Quebec." Quickly Parkman had hastened to reassure the reader (and himself)—But "none was there to tell him that the hero is greater than the poet." In this tragedy of pioneer athleticism he found what he called "the stern poetry of the wilderness."

Nor was this poetry, in its turn, sprung from a simple psychology of compensation. Parkman's work, in a sense, was also a quest for an orthodoxy he could live with. One might have expected an infusion of new life into Brahminism by strength of a marriage to the frontier; the struggle against "Yankee progress" could well have been carried on from the vantage point of the forest. But if Parkman was repelled by the official dogmas of his own society, he associated himself sternly with the pieties of the past. This was a kind of tribute which he paid to his tradition for his 'un-Americanism'. It was a bribe to his sense of responsibility. No 'noble savage', Pontiac had at least glimpsed and understood "the black and withering future"; his brutal murder by British mercenaries failed to move Parkman; and the Indian peoples were consistently indicted for their "opposition to civilization" and their inflexible hostility to "the idea of improvement". Parkman insisted on reading the whole struggle as a "contest between Liberty and Absolutism", as "the past against the future, the old against the new." A moral tension was set up between psychology and prejudice, and it was discharged only in pitiable ambivalence. Living with "liberty" in "the new", Parkman muttered maledictions at the bearers of progress and "would gladly have destroyed all their works and restored native savagery". With unabashed sentimentality he recalled "the woody bluff" and "prairies dotted with bison", for now the land was "darkened" with "the clustered roofs of the western metropolis." Steamships flocked to broad levees where the great river rolled down in lonely grandeur. Scalplocks and feathers had given way before "triumphant commonplace". The disenchanting screech of the locomotive had broken the spell of weird mysterious mountains . . . The Brahmin in his forest retreat had been trapped by the whole contemporary world from which he had hoped to remain truant.

I have often wondered whether an historian, who in his basic conception was so far from a critical grasp of historic processes as Parkman, could have a compelling contemporary accent. Croce has suggested that "criticism of history consists in recognizing whether an historical narrative is full or empty, whether or not it has as its heart a motive which links it up with the seriousness of life as it is . . ." Were, then, all of these pages cut off from the intricate fabric of our own culture and criticism? Or was there, perhaps, a thread which connected them with our own mind?

Somehow there was a deep and subtle excitement to the narrative of *LaSalle and the Discovery of the West*. I noted that when the LaSalle papers were discovered Parkman took the immense pains of rewriting the entire manuscript. There was a fine touch of scientific integrity there; it was not very long before that one historian, presented with some documents designed to correct his story of a siege, could reply, "Mon siège est fait," my literary page is written. Still it was not pride in a scholar's tradition, nor pictorial or even tragic power, that gave peculiar life and sensibility to the pages. In ways that are not too clear or easily defined there seemed to be a kinship with some other things in our literature which suggested a more basic American theme.

Parkman in his way had celebrated "the horizon-bounded waters and the lofty shores, green with primeval verdure." A "boundless vision"

had grown upon him—of “an untamed continent . . . mountains silent in primeval sleep . . . river, lake, and glimmering pool . . . wilderness, oceans mingling with sky . . .” Of LaSalle’s magnificent moment on the Mississippi he wrote:

“ . . . As he drifted down the turbid current, between the low and marshy shores, the brackish water changed to brine, and the breeze grew fresh with the salt breath of the sea. Then the broad bosom of the Great Gulf opened on his sight, tossing its restless billows, limitless, voiceless, lonely as when born of chaos, without a sail, without a sigh of life . . .”

Here, at its purest point, was the world-historic legend: this, as D. H. Lawrence felt, was the “dark, aboriginal continent”, this was “America’s own.”

To these “green and solitary shores” had come “the marvellous strangers”; from Beacon Hill Parkman looked back to an America “of wonder and mystery, of vague and magnificent promise”. And I thought of Scott Fitzgerald, looking back from the North Shore across the Sound, and those last sad pages of *The Great Gatsby*—

“ . . . and as the moon rose higher the inessential houses began to melt away until gradually I became aware of the old island here that once flowered for Dutch sailors’ eyes—the fresh green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby’s house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder . . .”

The original historic sin, for Fitzgerald too, was the clearing of the forest.

And I thought of Willa Cather, of the nostalgia in her *Shadows of the Rock* (which took so much from Parkman’s *Jesuits*), and particularly of her historian in *The Professor’s House* (in which the varieties of alienation are so well understood). Here was the tragedy of the scholar devitalized by a life lived in the past. The volumes of his narrative of the North American explorers finally rewarded him with money and leisure: the money dispossessed him from his desk, his attic, his house; scholarly routines, which had been “a shelter one could hide behind, the freedom to follow the trails in the southwest robbed him of his hole one could creep into”. Here in all its historic poignancy was the aristocrat groping his way on an America mesa. The affecting spectacle of the Brahmin in the forest had not been lost or forgotten.

MELVIN J. LASKY

Business and Politics

BUSINESS AS A SYSTEM OF POWER. By Robert Brady. Columbia University Press. \$3.00

The war has completed a social revolution in the thinking of American and English capitalism—as Fascism represented the coming-of-middle-age of German industrialism. A loose-jointed and lumbering economy, subject to the vagaries of exchange market conditions, has been overhauled to meet the sharp demands of a state-command war system. The lessons will not be lost in the post-war world: the economy will remain coordinated and the risks of market reduced by central controls.

But then the issue looms: who will plan and for what—the state, or business as an aggregate? In state planning within a liberal-capitalist framework, the state is subject to the pressures of labor, farm and small business groups. In German fascist society, the state is in the hands of political elements whose volatile wishes do not always jibe with business interests.

There are dangers in both paths. And that is why within business groups there has arisen again, and in a new and meaningful way, the demand for “self-government in business,” a slogan which conceals a tactic of neutralizing and adjusting state controls over business, while thrusting organized business as a coherent whole into the arena of politics. That is the meaning of the formation here recently of the Committee for Economic Development (and significantly, one of its main purposes is the organization from the top of small business); or the recent National Policy for Industry issued by 120 of the leading industrialists of Britain which calls for compulsory organization of all businesses into trade associations, and the grouping of these into pyramiding sectional units with a ‘council of industry’ at the apex exercising “rule-making powers,” in its own phrase, hitherto held by Parliament; or the inter-American Development Commission, headed by Eric Johnston of the U. S. Chamber of Commerce, which is readying South America as the private oyster for American capital.

These significant developments made all the more necessary the kind of comprehensive study of “business as a system of power” that Mr. Brady undertakes. The core of his book is a study of the large ‘peak associations’ of business (*Spitzenverbände*) as they function in Germany, Italy, Japan, France, Britain and the United States. His thesis is that fascism represents a linear development of the ‘increasing synchronization of monopoly’ (in Robert Lynd’s happy phrase), which characterizes liberal-capitalist economy, and that fascism is a capture of the state by monopoly capitalism. The thesis, an expansion of his chapter “The Looming Shadow of Fascism Over the World,” which concluded his earlier *Spirit and Structure of German Fascism* written seven years ago, draws its strength from the simplicity of the idea, its grounding in the orthodox beds of Marxist theory so that the reader’s ‘mental set’ is receptive, and from the compact documentation of the notion. The weakness of the book derives conversely from the exclusive absorption in the study of the economic aspects of fascism, the ignoring of the role of party, mass movement, ideology and

imperialism in fascism, and from pushing too hard the parallels in the development of business in various countries—in short from the inflexible adherence to a mechanical thesis developed ten years ago.

Brady throughout his book assumes a complete identity of interest among all businesses in the organization of the economy. The phrase 'peak associations' or *spitzenverbände* (Brady's constant use of the German term reveals his assumption, that the German experience is the pattern of future capitalist society) is used to characterize all organizations that tie together various business interests. But the German *spitzenverbände* perform cartel functions of a managerial nature in slicing up the economy; the National Association of Manufacturers, his American model, plays chiefly a publicity and research role; the *Zaibatsu* of Japan is an interlaced four-family group combine with direct ownership interests; and the main role of the Federation of British Industries is that of intermediary between business and government.

While German fascism is represented as the apotheosis of monopoly capitalism, Brady is forced to characterize the Nazi system as *status capitalism* (a term borrowed from Max Weber). Thus it is not the Marxist 'naked dictatorship of monopoly capitalism' but a hybrid combination of four blocs: party, industrialists, bureaucracy and army. Brady resolves the problem of differences among German capitalists, e.g. Schacht and Thyssen, with the explanation that they were not 'insiders,' or were ousted from the 'inside' group, which seems to miss the simple, but perhaps revealing, point (without entering fully the complex discussion of the nature of the German economy) that in this circumstance we see at work a new legal force, state sanctioned, that can *compel* allegiance or *expel* people. Under a monopoly capitalist system would Thyssen have had to flee for his life or have his property summarily confiscated? Brady's attempt to answer real problems has only produced a terminological distinction which betrays his original thesis and blurs any fundamental analysis.

Brady's book has a plausible and heavily studious air until one realizes that he has evaded in his analysis two of the most vital questions implicit in the subject: the nature of the war, and the pattern of industry-labor relations.

Brady's thesis makes it almost impossible to explain why there should be a war. If Germany, Britain, the U. S. et al are all organically evolving in the same direction—from capitalism to monopoly capitalism to *spitzenverbände* to fascism—and if there is an *elan vital* towards collusion and cohesion, then why a war? Why not broad agreements on an international scale which recapitulate the national patterns? Why not the extension of the Farben-Standard Oil cartel agreements to the whole of world industry? Brady fails, I feel, because he has misread the nature of fascism, while correctly calling attention to a phenomenon basic to the liberal-capitalist state, the 'synchronization of monopoly.' His concentration on the formal side of business organization within the democratic states leads him to ignore the rooted conflicts and pulls which led to war on the one hand or appeasement on the other. Thus, in Great Britain, the rising state-aided industrial monopoly groups, who concentrate on

domestic investment, favored war against Hitler, while the older financial aristocracy, seeking to hold together a crumbling system of *private* world empires, favored appeasement.

Brady adheres to the good old thesis of mechanical Marxism: monopoly capitalism's labor policy is "we're agin it!" Yet the singular feature of the "National Policy for Industry" issued by the top 120 British industrialists (Brady's book apparently was finished before this statement appeared) is that the trade unions are offered sweeping concessions in the offer of a junior partnership in the corporative organization of Britain. Nearly all the social reform planks demanded in the Labor Party platform *The Old Order and the New Society* are granted. Our own Committee for Economic Development is dominated by people who are not viciously anti-labor in the old class-war sense. Thomas Lamont, one of the key-figures in the C.E.D., purportedly arranged the conference between Myron Taylor and John L. Lewis that gave CIO the U. S. Steel contract. In short, these are the "New Deal business men," farsighted and shrewd, a far cry from the old burly industrialists like Weir and Girdler whose mentality dominated the NAM, yet more class-conscious in their understanding of the total organization of business and the need for a co-ordinated economy. These business men seemed to have learned a lesson in the activities of the Nazi party and are anxiously groping for new paths. While the Federation of British Industries and the National Association of Manufacturers are Brady's models of *spitzenverbände*, important sectors of English and American big business are revising their thinking.

All this indicates we are on the threshold of a new social era. There can no longer be economics qua economics and politics qua politics, with more or less automatic adjustments between the two because of reigning ideologies and common mores. The economic world today is largely a political world. Economics, once bound by certain invariable considerations dictated by the necessities of market exchange and capital investment, now becomes more flexible under political control. Political control can do so much more than the old 'iron laws of capitalism,' viz. the German war economy and its breaking of production shackles.

Politics, in a word, has become the new arena of struggle. And Business, under the necessity of organizing the economy, a job that can only be accomplished by political controls over the owners of industry (i.e., such as our war economy and its yet blundering methods in organizing full production), must now consciously and as an organized whole enter that arena.

Politics in the future will become more than ever class politics. Business fears politics and will seek to neutralize governmental machinery. But it is caught in the inflexible vise of its own development. It is on the collective road. One of its attempted answers may be a form of 'business collectivism' a variant of the Swope plan or the NRA or the corporative form camouflaged under the democratic ideology of "free enterprise." If control passes over into the hands of more blatantly imperialist elements than the "New Deal" group, a more outright fascist form may be in store for us. Of one thing we are sure, business is no

longer an independent power system, but is becoming an organized system of political power.

Brady's book raises the issue. But it never faces squarely or systematically the key position of the relationship of business to political movements—movements which by the very force of attracting elements other than the small population of business people, acquire an ideology and dynamism of their own. If business must now play more than the role of a pressure group, it becomes all the more necessary to examine the hidden and subtle relationships between business and the mechanisms of political power and bureaucratic administration. This Brady has not done. For all its accumulation of data, his book is superficial. His laborious analyses of the formal programs and organization-charts of big business groups are about as revealing, in the long run, as would be a history of the Communist International written entirely from convention thesis resolutions.

DANIEL BELL

The Two Rings: A Communication*

"Tao abides in the emptiness; the emptiness is the Fast of the Mind."

Chuang Tzu.

The old intellectual war we inherit is still going on—each side busy 'saving' the world from the other—denouncing, exposing, dissecting, refuting as persistently as ever with as little chance as ever of anything resembling a victory or defeat. Few indeed of those interested enough in the controversy to read three articles in it will ever change their views. They belong already to one party or the other, their reading serves to stiffen their necks, inflame their hearts and anneal their colours. They are amateurs of the combat and would be as much surprised by a conversion in the combatants as they would if bull and matador changed parts.

These are in fact public displays put on for people with a taste for combat. There are two Rings; in one the bull is almost always delicately slain at the last; in the other the matador as regularly receives unstinted goading and tossing. Theoretically the general public is present at both. Actually few stray into both Rings; though in either the faithful are treated to rousing descriptions of the unbelievable outrages systematically enacted in the other. Each performance indeed is dependent for most of its flavour on rumours and reports of the other. The combatants—like professional soldiers in the happy eighteenth century—are one another's customers, and might be tramping the road if the supply of opponents failed. There are almost no casualties; for the dying bull in one Ring is but a shadow of that other who is having such fun elsewhere, and the mangled matador is a simulacrum of the swordsman who in the other Ring is delivering the *coup de grace*.

*This comment by Mr. I. A. Richards on the articles by Messrs. Hook, Dewey, and Nagel that opened "The Failure of Nerve" series was written at the invitation of the editors.

This sketch, I fear, and with reason, may seem disgustingly frivolous. It might fit other disputes, but our training makes us slow to realize that it fits the great historic argument of the modern western tradition. It does seem monstrous to suggest that this issue—on which the fate of Christendom (to speak with one party) or the destiny of Western man (to speak with the other) is presented as turning—is largely unreal; that it does not touch, or no longer touches, the questions through which thought grows. "Doubt springs up like a shoot at the foot of truth," as Dante says, and it is these doubts rather than the traditional intellectual battles which will, I hope and believe, shape the coming world.

Both sides agree that religion today is having a great comeback. Whether we are to praise the Lord for this or be anguished is a decision which, for me, waits on other questions with which neither side, as I see it, is enough concerned. Their minds are made up, it appears; but surely it is the mind which is making itself, and how it makes itself, which matters. There is no meeting of minds, it seems to me, being attempted in these discussions. The polemical mind, on either side of the battle, if it is to do its duty to its cause, must deny or destroy just these new shoots of doubt. It cannot allow them in itself or in its opponent. To recognize them or encourage them is betrayal.

Here are some of these new shoots: doubt as to whether such seemingly opposed words as *mental* and *material*, *spiritual* and *natural*, should to a sufficiently reflective intelligence—mark any such cleavage as either side so much insists on; doubt whether *sin* and *obligation*, *responsibility* and *freedom*, when fully enough considered, mark topics which either side can form an adequate view of without extensive borrowings from the other; doubt whether science as naturalists conceive it can, as they hope, be based on observation unless we put into observation things of which observation naturalistically conceived gives no account; doubt whether the Christian doctrine of personal salvation can neglect psychopathology, and vice versa; doubt, in short, whether the thinker, if we separate him from the polemist, does not need both the language of religion and the language of science?

The intervener in such clashes is in an unenviable position. At the best he will be friendless. At worst, after crying "A plague o' both your houses," he will have to add "They have made worms' meat o' me!" But I am no Mercutio here—he made the mistake of taking part. I am rather a humble sort of Friar Laurence, thinking it wiser to provide a convenient meeting place for young deserters, and to be a go-between. Marriage between the houses and a new generation seems our best hope. This warfare otherwise will bring the whole state of man in jeopardy. We should note that the distinctive mark of Germany and Japan alike has been a mixture of phoney science and phoney religion conjoined. Worship of the Fuehrer or of the Imperial Destiny combined well with racism and fake history. We shall have more such mixtures if the guardians of factual inquiry and the guardians of human purpose keep up this fight between them. Meanwhile young deserters from either side will do well to remember what happened to Romeo and Juliet.

I. A. RICHARDS

Letters

Dear Colleagues:

Please accept my resignation from *Partisan Review*, effective next issue. Naturally, I regret severing connections with a magazine to which I have given much time and effort. I feel, however, that the divergence between my conception of the magazine and your own has become too great to be bridged any longer. This divergence is partly cultural: I feel *Partisan Review* has become rather academic, and favor a more informal, disresponsible and chance-taking magazine, with a broader and less exclusively "literary" approach. But the divergence is mainly political.

When we revived *Partisan Review* in 1937, it was as a Marxian socialist cultural magazine. This was what distinguished it from other literary organs like *Southern Review* and *Kenyon Review*, and this orientation, in my opinion, was responsible for much of the magazine's intellectual success. The war, however, has generated sharp political disagreements. Not only has the Marxist position been reduced to a minority of one—myself—but since Pearl Harbor there has been a tendency on the part of some editors to eliminate political discussion entirely. For my part, I have opposed this retreat and I have insisted that precisely because of the urgency of the crisis, social questions should bulk even larger in the magazine. The conflict has reached the point where there remains little of the *esprit de corps* necessary to put out a "little" magazine. I should have liked to carry my viewpoint. This being impossible, I am withdrawing. From now on *Partisan Review* will devote itself to cultural issues, leaving the thorny field of politics to others.

What interests me, however, is a magazine which shall serve as a forum and a rallying-point for such intellectuals as are still concerned with social and political issues. A magazine which, while not ignoring cultural matters, will integrate them with—and, yes, subordinate them to

the analysis of those deeper historical trends of which they are an expression. The denegation of the liberal magazines seems to render this kind of publication important today. I hope it will be possible to launch such a venture this fall.

Finally, I should add that Nancy Macdonald, who has functioned in the demanding capacity of business manager of *Partisan Review* for the greater part of the past five years, is also severing connections with the magazine. Her reasons are about the same as those indicated above, and she will work with me on the new project. Both of us wish the new *Partisan Review* the best of luck.

Sincerely,

DWIGHT MACDONALD

We naturally regret Macdonald's resignation. We regret even more, though, that Macdonald allowed himself to be carried away by his political passions. What he wanted was to abandon the cultural policy of P.R. and to transform it into a political magazine with literary trimmings. The use of literature as bait is a familiar strategy of left-wing politicians. Having failed, however, to convert the magazine to his special political uses, Macdonald had no alternative but to sever his connections with it.

There is this much to be said, too, that the politics Macdonald stood for were basically Trotskyite—plus a few personal variations, or heresies, if you will. Only in this sense can we take his word for it that he was the sole "Marxist" left on the editorial board. Hence it is rather disingenuous of him to suggest that the issue dividing us is the issue of estheticism versus a Marxist grasp of "historical trends". No such issue was ever debated. The truth is that Macdonald tended more and more to think of the magazine as an organ of political propaganda; and the more evident it became that the old revolutionary movement is in a state of decline, the more he wanted P.R. to take over its functions. We, on

the other hand, have always maintained that no magazine—least of all *P.R.*, which from its very inception has been edited mainly by literary men—can put itself forward as a substitute for a movement.

We could never agree to “subordinate” art and literature to political interests. It is precisely this sort of disagreement which led, in 1937, to our break with the Stalinists. For it is one thing to introduce the Marxist point of view into the analysis of culture, and something else again to impose it on culture in a total fashion. We all should be impatient these days with those attempting to set up an ideological or any other type of monopoly. Macdonald speaks of the magazine’s “intellectual success”; but he shows his bias in ascribing it largely to the Marxist slant rather than to the specific modulation achieved in combining socialist ideas with a varied literary and critical content. This will continue to be the policy of the magazine.

The kind of liveliness (“disrespectable, chance-taking”, etc.) that Macdonald appreciates is equally appreciated by all of us. There is no connection, however, between this longed-for liveliness and a sectarian political line, which invariably results in self-righteousness, academic revolutionism, and the incessant repetition of a few choice though all-too-elementary notions. Macdonald’s preoccupations made it increasingly difficult for him to find value in writing that offered no excitement to his political sense. True enough, the fate of all of us may depend on political events, but this in no way makes literature less attractive or less meaningful to those of us who respond to it.

We hope Macdonald’s new venture will turn out exactly as he wants it. We wish him luck.—The Editors.

NOTE FROM BUENOS AIRES

Sirs:

An American friend who has just arrived has shown me a number of “Partisan Review”; I find it most interesting and would like to become a subscriber.

Living in this country it is certainly stimulating to read a periodical such as

yours; firstly because there is only one literary magazine here that includes English verse, this appears irregularly but is quite good; secondly because the Spanish poetry of this country is so bad. As you are no doubt aware the poet in Spanish has to beware of the rhetorical, as the language itself possesses such a peculiar rhetorical quality, and if this is not controlled the result is melodramatic. A little girl selling newspapers sounds like an Ophelia entreating Hamlet. As W. H. Auden says somewhere: “In the day of the BRISTOL BOMBER their minds are appropriate to the PENNY FARTH-ING.”

If you derive your vision of the present time from Argentine poetry you would imagine that life today consists of dances on the village green, abstract discussions of still more abstract problems, rosepetal-curtsey love,—in fact of a world secure, joyous, and at peace.

My work has been published in various papers here and a few months ago a volume of my poetry appeared in collaboration with Hugo Manning who has since left for England.

Buenos Aires, Argentina W. SHAND

Sirs:

“I have seen several issues of your *Review*, and must express my appreciation of the excellent quality you maintain in an adult and stimulating magazine. I do not share your political principles nor what seems to me your essentially Rousseauistic view of the nature of man, but I do not have to agree with you in order to admire a lively and vigorous magazine—I think, indeed, the most interesting since HOUND AND HORN.

My good wishes for your continuance.

Very truly yours,

T. C. HOEPFNER

A QUESTION FOR MR. ORWELL

Sirs:

In the March-April, 1943, number Mr. Orwell indulges himself in an outburst against the Australians which strikes me as perhaps more symptomatic than true. . . . The notion that the “Australians . . . are only very loosely attached to the

Empire and culturally hostile to Britain" is bunk of the purest ray serene. Obviously Mr. Orwell has never been in Australia to gain a first-hand understanding of the Australian political and cultural outlook. In arranging the dominions in a hierarchy of "loyalty to Britain," as the phrase is, the usual order is New Zealand, Australia, Canada, South Africa and Eire.

In all the dominions there is a quality of mind which often confuses observers: on the one hand there is a strong nationalistic strain in private and public thinking; on the other there is a kind of Imperial patriotism. The Australians shift the emphasis between the two in response to circumstances and the time at which the circumstances arise, but I know of no instance where it can be said that the Imperial note is entirely absent . . .

If Australia today is perhaps more critical of British war policy than at any time in her association with Britain in war (and peace), Mr. Orwell *has* only to let his eye run down his own letter to

find the reason. He gives an exposition of the Europo-centrism of British policy and reports the views of Englishmen with regard to the Far Eastern "American" war. It is against the Churchillian Europo-centrism and, if Mr. Orwell is to be believed, popular Europo-centrism, that the Australians are currently protesting. They fear, apparently with reason, that their homeland, Australia, is thought of by some Englishmen as on all fours with the rubber colony of Malaya and equally to be sacrificed by the Englishmen whose minds, emotions, hopes and fears, are concentrated on Hitler and Europe.

As to Australia's "cultural hostility" to Britain, I must say I don't know what in hell Mr. Orwell is talking about. Australian culture is a British theme with Australian national variations. The foreign elements in it are purely incidental and they are mostly of American origin . . .

Sincerely,

Tuckahoe, N. Y. C. HARTLEY GRATTAN

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